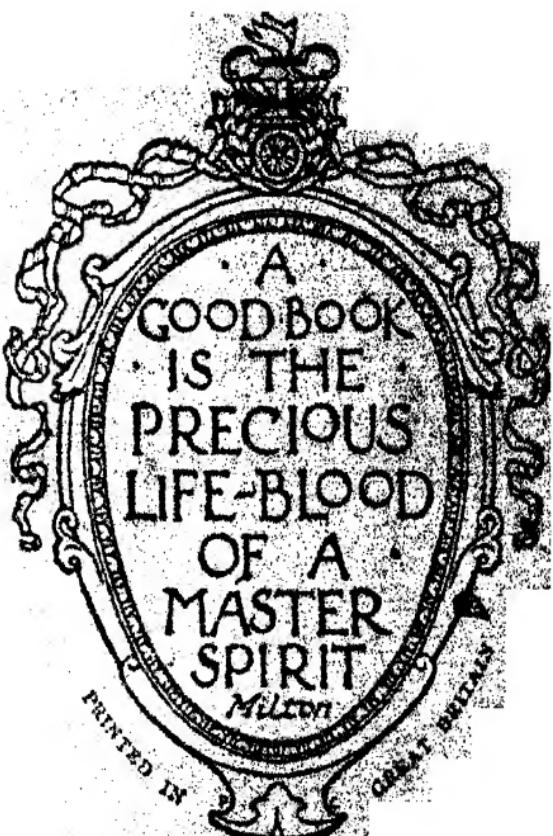


THIS BOOK
BELONGS
TO



A
GOOD BOOK
IS THE
PRECIOUS
LIFE-BLOOD
OF A
MASTER
SPIRIT

Milton

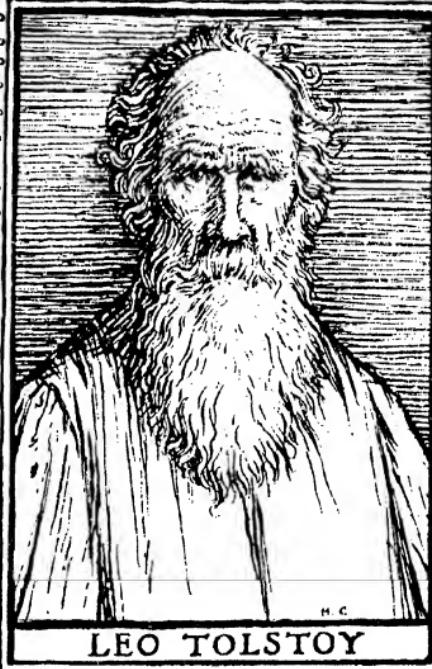
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GENERAL EDITOR
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NEW YORK E·P·DUTTON AND COMPANY

TALES FROM
TOLSTOY

WITH A SHORT LIFE
OF THE AUTHOR



AND LITERARY
EXERCISES

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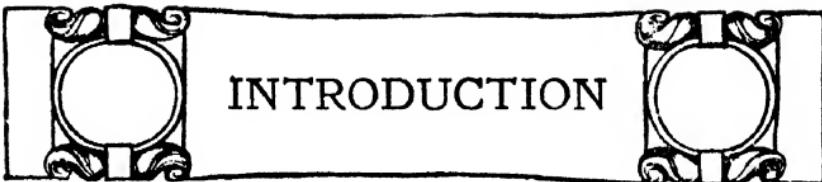
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INTRODUCTION

THE following stories are selected from the *Tales and Parables* of the Russian writer, Count Leo Tolstoy. At the end of the book will be found some interesting particulars about the life of Tolstoy: but for the present it is sufficient for the reader to know that these tales present a picture of life in rural Russia which is of simple truth. Tolstoy was an aristocrat and a landowner, but he lived among the Russian peasants as one of themselves; and he understood them better than they understood themselves or each other. The stories which follow, then, must be looked upon as pen-pictures of Russian peasant life drawn by the hand of a master.

These tales are told very simply. Some of them were actually read to and discussed by the peasants of Tolstoy's home circle, before they were printed. The author tells us, in one place, that one day he read one of his stories to some peasants and, having asked one of them to retell the tale in his own words, took many hints from him and worked them into the story. "I learn how to write from them," he writes to a friend, "and test my work

on them. That is the only way to produce stories for the people."

There was one old woman, Anisya, from a neighbouring village, who used to come to see Tolstoy and tell him tales ; and he used to delight both in her stories and in her way of telling them, and would say, " You are a real master, Anisya ! Thank you for teaching me to speak Russian—and to think Russian."





TALES FROM TOLSTOY

I. HOW MUCH LAND DOES A MAN REQUIRE ?

I

AN elder sister came from the town to visit a younger one. The elder one was married to a tradesman, and the younger to a peasant. As the two drank tea and talked the elder sister began to boast and make much of her life in town—how she lived and went about in ease and comfort, dressed her children well, had nice things to eat and drink, and went skating, walking, and to the theatre.

The younger sister was vexed at this, and retorted by running down the life of a tradesman's wife and exalting her own country one.

“ For my part, I should not care to exchange my life for yours,” she said. “ I grant you ours is an uneventful existence and that we know no excitement ; yet you, on the other hand, with all your fine living, must either do a very large trade

indeed or be ruined. You know the proverb : 'Loss is Gain's elder brother.' Well, you may be rich to-day, but to-morrow you may find yourself in the street. We have a better way than that, here in the country. The peasant's stomach may be thin, but it is long. That is to say, he may never be rich, yet he will always have enough."

The elder sister took her up quickly.

"'Enough' indeed ?" she retorted. "'Enough'—with nothing but your wretched pigs and calves? 'Enough,' with no fine dresses or company ? Why, however hard your man may work, you have to live in mud, and will die there—yes, and your children after you."

"Oh, no," replied the younger. "'Tis like this with us. Though we may live hardly, the land is at least our own, and we have no need to bow and scrape to anyone. But you in town—you live in an atmosphere of scandal. To-day all may be well with you, but to-morrow the evil eye may look upon you, and your husband find himself tempted away by cards or wine, and you and yours find yourselves ruined. Is it not so ?"

Pakhom, the younger sister's husband, had been listening near the stove.

"That is true," he said. "I have been turning over our mother earth since childhood, so have

had no time to get any foolishness into my head. Yet I have one grievance—too little land. Only give me land, and I fear no man—no, not even the Devil himself."

The two women finished their tea, chattered a little longer about dress, washed up the crockery, and went to bed.

All this time the Devil had been sitting behind the stove, and had heard everything. He was delighted when the peasant's wife led her husband on to brag—led him on to boast that, once given land, not even the Devil himself should take it from him.

"Splendid!" thought the Devil. "I will try a fall with you. I will give you much land—and then take it away again."

II

NEAR these peasants there lived a lady landowner, with a small property of 120 *desiatins*. Formerly she had got on well with the peasants and in no way abused her rights ; but she now took as overseer a retired soldier, who began to persecute the peasants with fines. No matter how careful Pakhom might be, one of his horses would get into the lady's oats, or a cow stray into her

Desiatin. An area of $2\frac{1}{2}$ acres.

garden, or the calves break into her meadows : and for all these things there would be fines levied.

Pakhom paid up, and then beat and abused his household. Much trouble did he get into with the overseer for the doings of the summer, so that he felt devoutly thankful to have got his cattle standing in the straw-yard again. He regretted the cost of their keep there, yet it cost him less anxiety in other ways.

That winter a rumour went abroad that the *Barina* was going to sell her land, and that the overseer was arranging to buy both it and the highway rights attached. This rumour reached the peasants, and they were dismayed.

" If," they thought, " the overseer gets the land he will worry us with fines even worse than he did under the *Barina*. We must get hold of the property somehow, as we all live round it in a circle."

So a deputation from the *Mir* went to see the *Barina*, and besought her not to sell the land to the overseer, but to give them the refusal of it, and they would outbid their rival. To this the *Barina* agreed, and the peasants set about arranging for the *Mir* to purchase the whole of her estate. They held a meeting about it, and yet

another one, but the matter did not go through. The fact was that the Unclean One always defeated their object by making them unable to agree. Then the peasants decided to try and buy the land in separate lots, each man as much as he could ; and to this also the *Barina* said she was agreeable. Pakhom heard one day that a neighbour had bought twenty *dessiatins*, and that the *Barina* had agreed to let half the purchase money stand over for a year. Pakhom grew envious. " If," he thought, " the others buy up all the land, I shall feel left out in the cold." So he took counsel of his wife. " Everybody is buying some," he said, " so we too had better get hold of ten *dessiatins*. We can't make a living as things are now, for the overseer takes it all out of us in fines." So they took thought how to effect the purchase.

They had 100 roubles laid by ; so that by selling a foal and half their bees, in addition to putting out their son to service, they managed to raise half the money.

Pakhom collected it all together, selected fifteen *dessiatins* and a small piece of timber land, and went to the *Barina* to arrange things. The bargain struck, they shook hands upon it, and Pakhom paid a deposit. Then he went to town, completed the conveyance (half the purchase

money to be paid now, and half within two years' time)—and lo ! Pakhom was a landowner ! He also borrowed a small sum of his brother-in-law, wherewith to purchase seed. This he duly sowed in his newly-acquired property, and a fine crop came up ; so that within a year he had repaid both the *Barina* and his brother-in-law. He was now an absolute proprietor. It was his own land that he sowed, his own hay that he reaped; his own firewood that he cut, and his own cattle that he grazed. Whenever he rode out to his inalienable estate, either to plough or to inspect the crops and meadows, he felt overjoyed. The very grass seemed to him different to other grass, the flowers to bloom differently. Once, when he had ridden over his land, it was just—land ; but now, although still land, it was land with a difference.

III

THUS did Pakhom live for a time, and was happy. Indeed, all would have been well if only the other peasants had left Pakhom's corn and pasture alone. In vain did he make repeated remonstrances. Shepherds would turn their flocks out into his meadows, and horses would somehow get into the corn at night. Again and again Pakhom drove them out and overlooked the matter, but at last

he lost his temper and laid a complaint before the district court. He knew that the peasants only did it from lack of land, not maliciously ; yet it could not be allowed, since they were eating the place up. He must teach them a lesson.

So he taught first one of them a lesson in court, and then another ; had one fined, and then a second. This aroused feeling against him, and his neighbours now began, of set purpose, to steal his crops. One man got into the plantation at night, and stripped the bark off no less than ten linden-trees. When Pakhom next rode that way and saw what had been done he turned pale. He drew nearer, and perceived that bark had been stripped off and thrown about, and trunks uprooted. One tree only had the miscreant left, after lopping all its branches, but the rest he had cleared entirely in his evil progress. Pakhom was furious. "Ah!" he thought, "if only I knew who had done this, I would soon get my own back on him!" He wondered and wondered who it could be. If anyone in particular, it must be Semka. So he went to see Semka, but got nothing out of him except bad language : yet he felt more certain than ever now that it *was* Semka who had done it. He laid a complaint against him, and they were both of them summoned to attend the court. The magistrates sat and sat, and then dis-

missed the case for want of evidence. This enraged Pakhom still more. He abused both the *starshina* and the magistrates. " You magistrates," he said, " are in league with thieves. If you were honest men you would never have acquitted Semka." Yes, there was no doubt that Pakhom was ill pleased both with the magistrates and with his neighbours. He began to live more and more apart on his land, and to have less and less to do with the *Mir*. .

At this time there arose a rumour that some of the peasantry thereabouts were thinking of emigrating. This made Pakhom think to himself : " But there is no reason why I should leave *my* land. If some of the others go, why, it will make all the more room for me. I can buy up their land, and so hedge myself in all round. I should live much more comfortably then. At present I am too cramped."

It happened soon afterwards that Pakhom was sitting at home one day, when a travelling peasant dropped in. Pakhom gave him a night's lodging and a meal, and then questioned him, in the course of conversation, as to whence in the name of God he had come. To this the peasant replied that he had come from lower down the river—from a spot beyond the Volga, where he had been in service. Then he went on to relate how a settlement was

Starshina. Village headman.

being formed there, every settler being enrolled in the *Mir* and allotted ten *desiatins* of land. It was *such* land, too, he said, and grew *such* rye! Why, the straw of the rye was tall enough to hide a horse, and thick enough together to make a sheaf per five handfuls! One peasant, he went on, who had arrived there a poor man and had had nothing but his two hands to work with now grew his fifty *desiatins* of wheat. Indeed, during the past year that man had made 5000 roubles by his wheat alone!

Pakhom's soul was fired by this, and he thought to himself: "Why should I stay here, poor and cramped up, when I might be making such a fine living as that? I will sell out here—both land and homestead—and go and build myself a new house and farm there with the money. Here, in this cramped-up spot, life is one long worry. At any rate, I might take a trip there and make inquiries."

So when the summer came he got himself ready and set out. He took a steamer down the Volga to Samara, and thence tramped 400 versts till he came to the place. It was all as had been described. The peasants lived splendidly, with ten *desiatins* of free land to each soul, and he was assured of a welcome by the *Mir*. Moreover, he was told

~~1 verst~~ *Vers.* Equal to 1166 $\frac{2}{3}$ linear yards.

3.3.65

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that anyone who came there with money could buy additional land—as much as ever he wanted—right out and in perpetuity. For three roubles a *dessiatin* a man could have the very finest land possible, and to any extent.

All this Pakhom learnt, and then returned home in the autumn. He began straightway to sell out, and succeeded in disposing both of land, buildings, and stock at a profit. Then he took his name off the *Mir*'s books, waited for the spring, and departed to the new place with his family.

IV

THEY duly arrived at their destination, and Pakhom was forthwith enrolled in the *Mir* of the great settlement (after moistening the elders' throats, of course, and executing the necessary documents). Then they took him and assigned him fifty *dessiatins* of land—ten for each soul of his family—in different parts of the estate, in addition to common pasture. Pakhom built himself a homestead and stocked it, his allotted land alone being twice what he had formerly possessed in the old place. It was corn-bearing land, too. Altogether life was ten times better here than where he had come from, for he had at his disposal both arable and

pasture land—sufficient of the latter always to keep as many cattle as he cared to have.

At first, while building and stocking, he thought everything splendid. Later, when he had settled down a bit, he began to feel cramped again. He wanted to grow white Turkish wheat as several others did, but there was hardly any wheat-bearing land among his five allotments. Wheat needed to be grown on grass, new, or fallow land, and such land had to be sown one year and left fallow for two, in order that the grass might grow again. True, he had as much soft land as he wanted, but it would only bear rye. Wheat required hard land, and hard land found many applicants, and there was not enough for all. Moreover, such land gave rise to disputes. The richer peasants sowed their own, but the poorer had to mortgage theirs to merchants. The first year, Pakhom sowed his allotments with wheat, and got splendid crops. Then he wanted to sow them with wheat again, but they were not large enough to admit both of sowing new land and of leaving last year's land to lie fallow. He must get hold of some more. So he went to a merchant, and took a year's lease of some wheat land. He sowed as much of it as he could, and reaped a magnificent crop. Unfortunately, however, the land was a long way from the settlement—in fact, the crop had to be carted

fifteen versts ; so, as Pakhom had seen merchant farmers living in fine homesteads and growing rich in the district where the land lay, he thought to himself : " How would it be if I took a longer lease of it and built a homestead there the same as they have done ? Then I should be right on the land." So he set about arranging to do so.

Thus did Pakhom live for five years, continually taking up land and sowing it with wheat. All the years were good ones, the wheat thrived, and the money came in. Yet just to live and live was rather tedious, and Pakhom began to tire of leasing land every year in a strange district and removing his stock there. Wherever there was a particularly good plot of land there would be a rush made for it by the other peasants, and it would be divided up before he was ready to lease and sow it as a whole. Once he went shares with a merchant in leasing a plot of pasture of some peasants, and ploughed it up. Then the peasants lost it in a law-suit, and his labour went for nothing. If only it had been his own land, absolutely, he need have given in to no one and been put to no trouble.

So he began to cast about where he could buy an estate outright. In this endeavour he fell in with a certain peasant who had ruined himself and was ready to let him have his property of 500

dessiatins cheap. Pakhom entered into negotiations with him, and, after much discussion, closed at 1000 roubles—half down, and half to stand over. One day after they had thus clinched the matter, a merchant drove up to Pakhom's homestead to bait his horses. They drank a tea-pot empty and talked. The merchant said he had come a long, long way—from the country of the Bashkirs, in fact, where (so he said) he had just purchased 5000 *dessiatins* for only 1000 roubles! Pakhom went on to question him further, and the merchant to answer. "All I did," said the latter, "was to make the elders there a few presents (*khalats*, carpets, and a chest of tea), to distribute about a hundred roubles, and to stand *vodka* to anyone who felt inclined for it. In the result I got the land for twenty copecks a *dessiatin*," and he showed Pakhom the deed. "The property," he concluded, "fronts upon a river, and is all of it open, grass, steppe land." Pakhom questioned him still further.

"You would not," went on the merchant, "find such land as that in a year. The same with all the Bashkir land. Moreover, the people there are as simple as sheep. You can get things out of them absolutely for nothing."

"Well," thought Pakhom, "what is the good of *Khalat*. A sort of long coat. Copecks. Farthings.

my giving 1000 roubles for only 500 *desiatins*, and still leaving a debt round my neck, when there I might become a proprietor indeed for the same money ?'

v

PAKHOM inquired of the merchant as to how to reach the country of the Bashkirs, and as soon as his informant had departed, got ready for the journey. Leaving his wife at home, and taking with him only his workman, he set out first for the town, where he bought a chest of tea, *vodka*, and other gifts, as the merchant had advised. Then the two drove on and on until they had covered 500 versts, and on the seventh day arrived at the camp of the Bashkirs. Everything turned out to be as the merchant had said. The people there lived in hide-tilted wagons, which were drawn up by the side of a river running through the open steppe. They neither ploughed the land nor ate corn, while over the steppe wandered droves of cattle and Cossack horses, the foals being tied to the backs of the wagons and their dams driven up to them twice a day to give them milk. The chief sustenance of the people was mare's milk, which the women made into a drink called *kumiss*, and then churned the *kumiss* into cheese. In fact, the

only drink the Bashkirs knew was either *kumiss* or tea, their only solid food mutton, and their only amusement pipe-playing. Nevertheless they all of them looked sleek and cheerful, and kept holiday the whole year round. In education they were sadly deficient, and knew no Russian, but were kindly and attractive folk for all that.

As soon as they caught sight of Pakhom they came out of their wagons and surrounded the guest. An interpreter was found, and Pakhom told him that he had come to buy land. At once the people were delighted, and, embracing Pakhom fervently, escorted him to a well-appointed wagon, where they made him sit down on a pile of rugs topped with soft cushions, and set about getting some tea and *kumiss* ready. A sheep was killed, and a meal served of the mutton, after which Pakhom produced the gifts from his *tarantass*, distributed them round, and shared out also the tea. Then the Bashkirs fell to talking among themselves for a while, and finally bade the interpreter speak.

“I am to tell you,” said the interpreter, “that they are greatly taken with you, and that it is our custom to meet the wishes of a guest in every possible way, in return for the presents given us. Since, therefore, you have given us presents, say

Tarantass. Light two-wheeled cart.

now what there is of ours which you may desire, so that we may grant it you."

"What I particularly desire," replied Pakhom, "is some of your land. Where I come from," he continued, "there is not enough land, and what there is is ploughed out, whereas you have much land, and good land, such as I have never before beheld."

The interpreter translated, and the Bashkirs talked again among themselves. Although Pakhom could not understand what they were saying, he could see that they kept crying out something in merry tones and then bursting into laughter. At last they stopped and looked at Pakhom, while the interpreter spoke.

"I am to tell you," he said, "that in return for your kindness we are ready to sell you as much land as you may wish. Merely make a gesture with your hand to signify how much, and it shall be yours."

At this point, however, the people began to talk among themselves again, and to dispute about something. On Pakhom asking what it was, the interpreter told him: "Some of them say that the Starshina ought to be asked first about the land, and that nothing should be done without him, while others say that that is not necessary."

Starshina. Chieftain.

VI

SUDDENLY, while the Bashkirs were thus disputing, there entered the wagon a man in a foxskin cap, at whose entry everyone rose, while the interpreter said to Pakhom : " This is the Starshina himself." At once Pakhom caught up the best *khalat* and offered it to the newcomer, as well as five pounds of tea. The Starshina duly accepted them, and then sat down in the place of honour, while the Bashkirs began to expound to him some matter or another. He listened and listened, then gave a smile, and spoke to Pakhom in Russian.

" Very well," he said, " pray choose your land wheresoever it pleases you. We have much land."

" So I am to take as much as I want ! " thought Pakhom to himself. " Still, I must strengthen that bargain somehow. They might say, ' The land is yours,' and then take it away again."

" I thank you," he said aloud, " for your kind speech. As you say, you have much land, whereas I am in need of some. I only desire to know precisely which of it is to be mine ; wherefore it might be well to measure it off by some method and duly convey it to me. God only is lord of

life and death, and, although you are good people who now give it to me, it might befall that your children would take it away again."

The Starshina smiled.

"The conveyance," he said, "is already executed. This present meeting is our mode of confirming it—and it could not be a surer one."

"But," said Pakhom, "I have been told that a merchant visited you recently, and that you sold him land and gave him a proper deed of conveyance. Pray, therefore, do the same with me."

The Starshina understood now.

"Very well," he replied. "We have a writer here, and will go to a town and procure the necessary seals."

"But what is your price for the land?" asked Pakhom.

"Our price," answered the Starshina, "is only 1000 roubles per day."

Pakhom did not understand this day-rate at all.

"How many *desiatins* would that include?" he inquired presently.

"We do not reckon in that way," said the Starshina. "We sell only by the day. That is to say, as much land as you can walk round in a day, that much land is yours. That is our measure, and the price is 1000 roubles."

Pakhom was astounded.

" Why, a man might walk round a great deal in a day," he said.

The Starshina smiled again.

" Well, at all events," he said, " it will be yours. Only, there is one condition—namely, that if on that same day you do not return to the spot whence you started, your money is forfeited."

" But how do you decide upon that spot ? " asked Pakhom.

" We take our stand," replied the Starshina, " upon whatsoever spot you may select. I and my people remain here, while you start off and describe a circle. Behind you will ride some of our young men, to plant stakes wherever you may desire that to be done. Thereafter a plough will be driven round those stakes. Describe what circle you wish ; only, by the time of the setting of the sun you must have returned to the place from which you started. As much land as you may circle, that much land will be yours."

So Pakhom accepted these terms, and it was agreed to make an early start on the morrow. Then the company talked again, drank more *kumiss*, and ate more mutton, passing on thence to tea, and the ceremonies being prolonged until night-fall. At length Pakhom was led to a bed of down and the Bashkirs dispersed, after first promising

to gather on the morrow beyond the river and ride out to the appointed spot before sunrise.

VII

PAKHOM lay on his bed of down, but could not get a wink of sleep for thinking of the land which, as he said, "I am going to farm here."

"For I mean to mark out a very large 'Promised Land' to-morrow," he continued to himself. "I can cover at least fifty versts in the day, and fifty versts should enclose somewhere about 10,000 *desiatins*. Then I shall be under nobody's thumb, and be able to afford a pair-ox plough and two labourers. I shall plough up the best land, and feed stock on the rest."

All that night Pakhom never closed his eyes, but dozed off for a short while just before dawn. The instant he did so he had a dream. He seemed to be lying in this identical wagon and listening to somebody laughing and talking outside. Wishing to see who it was that was laughing so much, he went outside, and saw the Starshina sitting on the ground and holding his sides as he rolled about in ecstasies of mirth. Then in his dream Pakhom walked up to him and asked him what the joke was—and immediately saw that it was not the Starshina at all, but the merchant who had so lately visited him to tell him about this land.

Then again, he had scarcely so much as said to the merchant, "Did I not see you at my home a little while ago?" when the merchant suddenly changed into the peasant from away down the Volga who had called at his farm in the old country. Finally Pakhom perceived that this peasant was not a peasant at all, but the Devil himself, with horns and hoofs, and that he was gazing fixedly at something as he sat there and laughed. Then Pakhom thought to himself: "What is he looking at, and why does he laugh so much?" And in his dream he stepped a little aside to look, and saw a man—barefooted, and clad only in a shirt and breeches—lying flat on his back, with his face as white as a sheet. And presently, looking yet more attentively at the man, Pakhom saw that the man was himself!

He gave a gasp and awoke—awoke feeling as if the dream were real. Then he looked to see if it were getting light yet, and saw that the dawn was near.

"It is time to start," he thought. "I must arouse these good people."

VIII

PAKHOM arose, awakened his workman in the *tarantass*, and told him to put the horse in and

go round to call the Bashkirs, since it was time to go out upon the steppe and measure off the land. So the Bashkirs arose and got themselves ready, and the Starshina also arrived. They break-fasted off *kumiss*, and were for giving Pakhom some tea, but he could not wait. "If we are to go, let us go," he said. "It is fully time." So the Bashkirs harnessed up and set out, some on horseback, and some in carts, while Pakhom drove in his *tarantass* with his workman. They came out upon the steppe just as the dawn was breaking, and proceeded towards a little knoll—called in the Bashkir dialect a *shichan*. There the people in carts alighted, and everyone collected together. The Starshina approached Pakhom and pointed all round with his hand. "Whatsoever land you see from here," he said, "is ours. Choose whichever direction you like." Pakhom's eyes glowed, for all the land was grass, level as the palm of his hand, and black beneath the turf as a poppy-head. Only where there was a ravine was there a break in the grass—grass which was everywhere breast-high. The Starshina took off his foxskin cap, and laid it in the exact centre of the knoll. "This," he said, "will be the mark. Lay you your money in it, and your servant shall remain beside it while you are gone. From this mark you will start, and to this mark you will return.

As much land as you circle, all of it will be yours."

Pakhom took out his money, and laid it in the cap. Then he divested himself of his cloak, stripped himself to his waistcoat, tightened his belt round his stomach, thrust his wallet with some bread into his bosom, tied a flask of water to his shoulder-strap, pulled up his long boots, and prepared to start. He kept debating within himself which direction it would be best to take, for the land was so good everywhere. "Oh, well, as it is all the same, I will walk towards the rising sun," he decided at length. So he turned his face that way, and kept trying his limbs while waiting for the sun to appear. "I must lose no time," he thought, "for I shall do my best walking while the air is yet cool."

Then the mounted Bashkirs also ascended the knoll, and stationed themselves behind Pakhom. No sooner had the sun shot his first rays above the horizon than Pakhom started forward and walked out into the steppe, the mounted men riding behind him.

He walked neither slowly nor hurriedly. After he had gone about a verst he stopped, and had a stake put in. Then he went on again. He was losing his first stiffness and beginning to lengthen his stride. Presently he stopped again, and had

another stake put in. He looked up at the sun—which was now lighting the knoll clearly, with the people standing there—and calculated that he had gone about five versts. He was beginning to grow warm now, so he took off his waistcoat, and then fastened up his belt again. Then he went on another five versts, and stopped. It was growing really hot now. He looked at the sun again, and saw that it was breakfast time. “One stage done!” he thought. “But there are four of them in the day, and it is early yet to change my direction. Nevertheless, I must take my boots off.” So he sat down, took them off, and went on again. Walking was easier now. “As soon as I have covered another five versts,” he reflected, “I will begin to bend round to the left. That spot was exceedingly well chosen. The further I go, the better the land is.” So he kept straight on, although, when he looked round, the knoll was almost out of sight, and the people on it looked like little black ants.

“Now,” he said to himself at length, “I have made the circle large enough, and must bend round.” He had sweated a good deal and was thirsty, so he raised the flask and took a drink. Then he had a stake put in at that point, and bent round sharply to the left. On he went and on, through the high grass and the burning heat. He

was beginning to tire now, and, glancing at the sun, saw that it was dinner-time. "Now," he thought to himself, "I might venture to take a rest." So he stopped and ate some bread, though without sitting down, since he said to himself: "If I once sat down I should go on to *lying* down, and so end by going off to sleep." He waited a little, therefore, till he felt rested, and then went on again. At first he found walking easy, for the meal had revived his strength, but presently the sun seemed to grow all the hotter as it began to slant towards evening. Pakhom was nearly worn out now, yet he merely thought to himself: "An hour's pain may a century gain."

He had traversed about ten versts of this lap of the circle, and was about to bend inwards again to the left, when he caught sight of an excellent bit of land round a dry ravine. It would be a pity to leave that out. "Flax would grow so splendidly there!" he thought. So he kept straight on until he had taken in the ravine, and, having had a stake planted at the spot, again wheeled inwards. Looking towards the knoll he could see that the people there were almost indistinguishable. They could not be less than fifteen versts away. "Well," he thought, "I have covered the two long laps of the circuit, and must take this last one by the shortest cut possible." So he started upon the

last lap, and quickened his pace. Once again he looked at the sun. It was now drawing near to the time of the evening meal, and he had only covered two versts of the distance. The starting point was still thirteen versts away. "I must hurry straight along now," he said to himself, "however rough the country be. I must not take in a single extra piece on the way. I have enclosed sufficient as it is." And Pakhom headed straight for the knoll.

IX

HE pressed on straight in its direction, yet found walking very difficult now. His feet were aching badly, for he had chafed and bruised them, and they were beginning to totter under him. He would have given anything to have rested for a while, yet knew that he must not if he was ever to regain the knoll before sunset. The sun at least would not wait. Nay, it was like a driver ever lashing him on. From time to time he staggered. "Surely I have not miscalculated ?" he thought to himself. "Surely I have not taken in too much land ever to get back, however much I hurry ? There is such a long way to go yet, and I am dead beat. It cannot be that all my money and toil have gone in vain ? Ah, well, I must do my best."

Pakhom pulled himself together, and broke into

a run. He had torn his feet till they were bleeding, yet he still ran on, ran on, ran further and further. Waistcoat, boots, flask, cap—he flung them all away. “Ah!” was his thought, “I was too pleased with what I saw. Now everything is lost, and I shall never reach the mark before sunset.” His fears served to render him only the more breathless, but he still ran on, his shirt and breeches clinging to his limbs with sweat, and his mouth parched. In his breast there were a pair of blacksmith’s bellows working, and in his heart a steam hammer, while his legs seemed to be breaking under him and to be no longer his own. He had lost all thought of the land now. All that he thought of was to avoid dying from exertion. Yet, although he was so afraid of dying, he could not stop. “To have gone so far,” he thought, “and then to stop! Why, they would think me a fool!” By this time he could hear the Bashkirs cheering and shouting to him, and their cries stirred his heart with fresh spirit. On, on he ran with his last remaining strength, while the sun was just touching the horizon. Ah, but he was close to the spot now! He could see the people on the knoll waving their hands to him and urging him on. He could see the foxskin cap lying on the ground, the money in it, the Starshina sitting beside it with his hands pressed to his sides.

Suddenly Pakhom remembered his dream. " Yet I have much land now," he thought, " if only God should bring me safe to live upon it. But my heart misgives me that I have killed myself." Still he ran on. For the last time he looked at the sun. Large and red, it had touched the earth, and was beginning to sink below the horizon. Pakhom reached the knoll just as it set. " Ah ! " he cried in his despair, for he thought that everything was lost. Suddenly, however, he remembered that he could not see from below so well as could the people on the knoll above him, and that to them the sun would still seem not to have set. He rushed at the slope, and could see as he scrambled up it that the cap was still there. Then he stumbled and fell—yet in the very act of falling stretched out his hands towards the cap—and touched it !

" Ah, young man," cried the Starshina, " you have earned much land indeed ! "

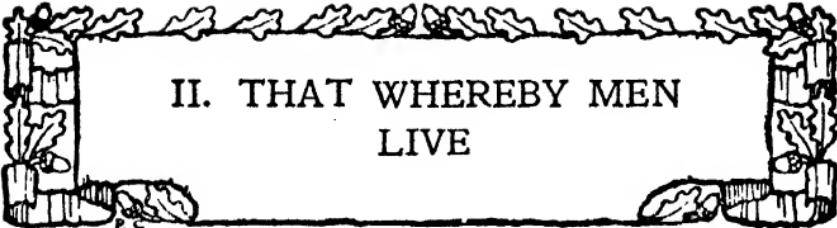
Pakhom's servant ran to his master and tried to raise him, but blood was running from his mouth. Pakhom lay there dead. The servant cried out in consternation, but the Starshina remained sitting on his haunches—laughing, and holding his hands to his sides.

At length he got up, took a spade from the ground, and threw it to the servant.

"Bury him," was all he said.

The Bashkirs arose and departed. Only the servant remained. He dug a grave of the same length as Pakhom's form from head to heels—three Russian ells—and buried him.





II. THAT WHEREBY MEN LIVE

I

“ We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.

But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

He that loveth not knoweth not God : for God is love.

No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another God dwelleth in us.

God is love ; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar : for he that loveth not his brother whom

he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? " (1 JOHN iii. and iv.)

ONCE upon a time a cobbler lodged with his wife and children at a *muzhik's*. He had no hut or land of his own, but supported himself solely by cobbling. Bread was dear, and work cheap, and he lived from hand to mouth. He and his wife shared a sheepskin coat between them—and it was a ragged one at that!—but for the last two years he had been saving up to buy a skin for a new one.

By the autumn he had amassed a small sum. Three roubles in paper money lay in his wife's box, while five roubles and twenty copecks were due to him from certain *muzhiks* in the village. So one morning after breakfast he put on his wife's twill-wadded jacket over his shirt, and over that, again, his own woollen *kaftan*. Then he thrust the three one-rouble notes into his pocket, cut himself a walking-stick, and set out. As he went along he thought to himself: "I will first get the five roubles out of those *muzhiks*, then add to them the three roubles which I have already, and buy a sheepskin for a new coat."

So he reached the village and went to call upon

Muzhik. Peasant; also spelt *moujik*.

Kaftan. Under-jacket or smock.

the first *muzhik*. The *muzhik* was not at home, and although his wife promised to send her husband along with the money before the week was out, she could not pay the cobbler anything at present. Then the cobbler went to the hut of another *muzhik*, but the owner swore that he was destitute. All that he could do was to clear off a little debt of twenty copecks for the stitching of a boot.

Now, the cobbler had been reckoning that, if he failed to get the money, he might be able to get a sheepskin on credit; but the vendor of sheepskins reckoned otherwise.

"Bring me *all* the cash," he said, "and *then* you can pick what skin you like. We all of us know how difficult it is to get quit of a debt."

Thus it came about that the cobbler did no business that morning, beyond being paid twenty copecks for a stitching job and receiving another pair of boots to mend. Depressed at the result, he went and spent the twenty copecks on *vodka*, and then started for home. In the morning the day had seemed to him frosty and cold, but now it felt quite warm, even without a fur coat. As he walked along he kept talking to himself as he struck at frozen lumps of snow with the stick which he carried in one hand, and swung by their laces the pair of boots which he carried in the other.

"I feel quite warm without a sheepskin," he remarked. "I have drunk only the merest drop, yet it is bubbling finely in my veins. I don't need a sheepskin. I am going along now as comfortably as can be. That is the sort of man I am. What have I to fret about? I can worry along without that coat. I shan't want it in a lifetime. Only, of course—there's my wife. *She* keeps worrying about it. Well, it is a shameful thing that one should do a job for a man, and he should lead you a dance for nothing. But just you wait, my fine fellow. If you don't bring me my money this week I'll have the cap off your head. A fine thing indeed! Then there was that other one—paid me a beggarly twenty copecks! What can one do with twenty copecks? Drink them, that's all. He swore he was hard up. 'Are you hard up, then,' I might have said, 'and not I as well? You have a hut and cattle and everything, while I have my all on my back. You grow your own bread, while I have to buy it. Come what may, I have to raise three roubles a week for bread alone, and when I get home to-day the stock will be finished, and I shall have to fork out another rouble-and-a-half. Pay me what you owe me!'"

Thus the cobbler went rambling on, until he came to the roadside chapel at the turning. Some-

thing showing white behind it caught his eye. Dusk was closing in, and although the cobbler peered and peered at the thing he could not make out what it was. "There never used to be a stone of any kind there," he thought. "Is it a bullock, then? No, it hardly looks like one. It seems to have a head like a man, somehow, only it is white all over. But what should bring a man there?"

He took a step or two nearer, and the thing became distinguishable. Strange to say, it *was* a man, whether dead or alive—a man sitting motionless, and without clothing, with his back against the chapel. The cobbler grew nervous as he thought to himself: "Somebody must have murdered him, taken his money, and thrown the body there. Just you go on, and see to it that *you* aren't the next one to be robbed."

So the cobbler began to move forward past the chapel. As he drew level with it the man became hidden from view, so the cobbler stopped, stepped backward a pace or two, peered about him, and saw that the man was now sitting erect, and moving his body to and fro as though trying to catch sight of him. The cobbler's fears increased.

"Shall I approach him or shall I go on?" he debated. "To approach him might land me in goodness knows what. How am I to tell what he

is ? He cannot be up to any good here. If I went near him he might spring out upon me and throttle me before I could get away. And even if he didn't throttle me I might have an awkward tussle with him. There would be no getting rid of him until he had got everything I have. The Lord defend us ! ”

He quickened his pace, and was nearly past the chapel when his conscience began to prick him.

“ What is the matter with you, Simon ? ” he asked himself. “ The man may be dying miserably, and yet you pass him by as if you were afraid of him ! Are you so wonderfully rich, then, that you need guard against having your valuables stolen ? Fie, for shame, Simon ! ”

II

So he turned back and approached the man. As he did so he peered at him, and saw that he was a young fellow in the prime of life, and that his body bore no marks of violence. He seemed merely frozen and terrified as he sat leaning forward without looking at the approaching cobbler, as though too weak to raise his eyes to do so. Just as Simon reached him, however, he lifted his head suddenly, like one recovering from a swoon, and, opening his eyes wide, fixed them on

Simon's face. That look altogether reassured the cobbler, and, throwing down the boots which he carried, he unclasped his belt, placed it in the boots, and began to take off his *kaftan*.

"Come!" he said. "What is this? You must have something to put on. Here you are,"—and, taking the man under the arms, he essayed to lift him. The man, however, rose unaided, and Simon then saw that his body was slender and clean, while his legs and arms bore no signs of injury, and his face was mild in expression. The cobbler drew the *kaftan* over the man's shoulders, and since the latter had some difficulty in finding the sleeves, Simon guided his arms into them, then pulled the coat up, straightened out the skirts, and belted them round. Next he took his ragged cap off, and was just about to place it on the naked man's head when he felt the cold strike upon his crown.

"I am bald all over," he thought, "whereas he has long, curly hair,"—and he put his cap on again. "I should do better to put those boots on him," he added to himself, and, sitting down, did so.

The man thus clothed, the cobbler said :

"There you are, brother. Now walk along with me and get yourself warm. Things like this cannot be helped. Do you feel able to move?"

The man looked in a friendly way at Simon, but said nothing.

"Why don't you speak?" asked the cobbler. "We can't spend the winter here. We must get home to my lodgings. Take my stick to lean upon if you feel weak. Now then, come along."

The man then started and walked easily enough and without lagging behind. As they proceeded Simon asked him :

"Where do you hail from?"

"From another part than this."

"Yes, I know that, for I know everyone about here. But how did you come to be by the chapel?"

"I cannot say."

"Someone must have assaulted you, then?"

"No, no one assaulted me. God was punishing me."

"Of course; all things come of God, and it is our duty to submit to them. Yet where were you bound for?"

"For nowhere in particular."

This rather surprised Simon. The man did not seem like a rogue, and yet, civil though his speech was, he would reveal nothing about himself. Simon reflected, however, "One never knows how things may be," and then continued to his companion :

" Well, come to my lodgings now, and you can go on your way later."

So he walked on, and the stranger made no attempt to leave him, but kept by his side. The wind was now rising, and getting through Simon's shirt, with the result that the drink was beginning to die out of him and to leave him chilled. He kept wheezing through his nose as he strode ahead and, wrapping his wife's jacket about him, reflected :

" This is what that precious sheepskin has brought me to ! I went out for a sheepskin, and am returning without even so much as a *kaftan* to my back—let alone that I am bringing a perfectly naked man with me ! Matrena will not be pleased, I am afraid,"—and that last thought made him nervous. Yet when he looked at the stranger he remembered the glance which the man had given him by the oratory, and his heart, somehow, leapt for joy.

III

SIMON's wife finished her duties betimes that day. She chopped the firewood, fetched water, fed the children, had something to eat herself, and then debated when she should make bread—to-day or to-morrow. There was still a large piece left.

"If," she thought, "Simon gets dinner there, and so does not eat much for supper, the bread will last over to-morrow."

Then she turned and turned the piece over, and finally decided : "I won't make bread to-day. There is only meal enough left for one loaf. We can last over till Friday."

So she put the piece aside, and sat down at the table to sew a patch on her husband's shirt. As she stitched away she thought of Simon, and wondered whether he had bought a new sheepskin for a coat.

"I do hope the sheepskin-seller won't cheat him," she reflected ; "but that man of mine is a regular simpleton. He never cheats a soul himself, yet a little child can lead him by the nose. Eight roubles is no trifling sum. He ought to get a good skin for that—if not a tanned one, at all events a good rough one. How starved I have been all this winter without one ! Why, I couldn't even go to the brook, or anywhere ! This morning, again, Simon went out with all our clothes upon him, and left me nothing to wear. He is late in coming home, too. It is time he *were* home. I hope he hasn't gone making merry, that rascal of mine."

This thought had only just passed through her mind when a tread was heard on the steps outside, and someone entered. Matrena made fast

her needle in her work, went out into the porch, there saw that *two* persons had come in—namely, Simon, and some man or other in felt boots and without a cap.

At once she caught the smell of *vodka* proceeding from her husband. “So he *has* been making merry!” she thought; and when, in addition, she saw that he lacked his *kaftan* and was clad only in her jacket, as well as had nothing in his hand and nothing to say for himself beyond a shrug of the shoulders, her heart was torn within her. “He has drunk the money away,” she thought again. “Yes, he has been hobnobbing with this tramp, and then brought him home as well!”

She ushered them into the hut in front of her. Then she saw that the stranger was a thin, lanky-looking young man—and that he was wearing their own *kaftan*! No shirt could be seen beneath it, nor cap above it. When he had entered he remained standing perfectly still, with his eyes cast down, so that Matrena thought: “He can’t possibly be honest, for he seems so nervous.”

She frowned grimly, and crossed over to the stove to watch what they would do next.

Simon merely took off his cap, and sat down on the bench as though perfectly conscience-free.

“Well, Matrena?” he said. “Get us some supper, will you?”

Matrena only snorted under her breath, and remained standing by the stove. She never stirred, but looked at them each in turn, and shook her head ominously. Simon then saw that his wife was put out about something, but, there being no help for it, he appeared not to notice her, but took the stranger by the arm.

"Sit you down, brother," he said, "and we will have some supper." The stranger seated himself on the bench beside Simon.

"Have you anything cooked that you could give us?" the latter went on to his wife.

Then temper got the better of Matrena.

"Yes, I *have* something cooked," she retorted, "but not for *you*. *You*, I can see, have drunk your senses away. You go out to buy a sheepskin, and come home without even a *kaftan*—and with a naked tramp in tow as well. I have no supper for a pair of drunkards like you."

"Come, come, Matrena! Why wag your tongue so foolishly? You should first have asked me who the man is."

"Well, suppose you tell me, then, what you have done with the money?"

For answer, Simon approached the *kaftan*, took the paper money out of one of the pockets, and unrolled it.

"Here is the money," he said. "Trofinoff did

not pay up to-day, but has promised to do so to-morrow."

But Matrena's rage only increased. He had brought no sheepskin with him, had put their one and only *kaftan* on to a naked man's back, and brought him home! She snatched the money from the table and ran to hide it, saying as she did so :

" I have no supper for you. One can't feed every bare-backed drunkard who comes along."

" Now then, Matrena, hold your tongue. You should give people a chance to explain."

" How much sense is one likely to hear from a drunken fool indeed ? It was not for nothing that I never wanted to marry a tipsy brute like you ! My mother gave me some linen—and you drank it away ! You go out to buy a sheepskin—and you drink that away too ! "

Simon tried hard to explain to his wife that he had only drunk away twenty copecks, as well as to tell her where he had found the stranger, but she would hardly let him get a single word in, interrupting him at every third one, and even raking up sores fully ten years old.

On and on she went, until finally she leapt upon him and seized him by the sleeve.

" Give me my jacket !" she cried. " It is the only one I have, yet you sneaked it this morning

to wear yourself ! Give it to me, I say, you tow-stuffed cur ! May you die of a fit some day ! ”

Simon hastened to take the jacket off, turning the sleeves inside out as he did so, but since his wife held on to it all the time, the result was that its seams split open. Seizing it and throwing it over her head, Matrena made for the door, and was just about to leave the room, when she stopped. The truth was that her heart was relenting, and she wanted both to subdue her temper and to learn who the man was.

IV

SHE stopped, therefore, and said :

“ If the man was honest, he would not have been going about with never a shirt to his back ; and if you yourself had been up to any good to-day you would have told me at once where you picked up this dandy of yours.”

“ Very well, I will tell you now,” answered Simon. “ As I was passing the chapel I found this man lying naked and frozen. It is not summer time now, you must remember, that a man should go naked. God led me to him, else he must have perished. Well, what could I do ? Such things do not happen for nothing. I took him, clothed

him, and brought him here. That is all. Calm your temper, Matrena, for to give way to it is sinful. Remember that we must all of us die some day."

Matrena was about to burst out scolding again, when she glanced at the stranger and remained silent. He was sitting there, quite motionless, on the extreme edge of the bench, with his hands clasped upon his knees, his head sunk upon his breast, his eyes closed, and his face lined and contorted as though something were stifling him.

"Matrena," went on Simon, "is there nothing of God within you?"

As she heard these words she threw another glance at the stranger, and her heart suddenly contracted with pity. She turned back from the door, went to the stove, and drew out thence some supper. She set a tea-pot on the table, poured out some *kvas*, produced their last piece of bread, and furnished the two men with a knife and spoon apiece.

"Eat away," she said.

Simon nudged the stranger. "Draw up nearer," he urged him. Then he cut some bread, divided it up, and they began supper. But Matrena sat by the corner of the table, her head upon her hand, and gazed at the stranger.

Kvas. A liquor made of rye-meal and rye-malt.

She felt sorry for him, as well as attracted towards him ; and when suddenly his face cleared and the lines vanished from his brow as he raised his eyes to hers and smiled, her heart leapt within her.

After supper she washed up the things, and then began to question him.

“ Where do you come from ? ” she asked.

“ From somewhere else than here.”

“ Then how came you to fall by the wayside ? ”

“ I cannot say.”

“ Who was it took your clothes from you ? ”

“ God was punishing me.”

“ But you were lying there naked ? ”

“ Yes, I was lying there naked and frozen, when Simon saw me and had compassion upon me. He took off his *kaftan* and put it upon my shoulders, and bade me come with him hither. And here you have given me food and drink, and have shown me kindness. May God do so unto you also ! ”

Matrena rose, took from the window-sill an old shirt of Simon’s—the same one which she had been sewing—and gave it to the stranger. She also found trousers, and these too she gave him.

“ Here,” she said ; “ I see that you have no shirt. Put these on, and then go to rest where you like—whether on the bench or on the stove.”

The stranger stripped himself of the *kaftan*, put

on the shirt and trousers, and lay down upon the bench. Matrena extinguished the light, took the *kaftan*, and went to her husband.

She covered herself over with the skirts of the *kaftan* and lay down, but not to sleep, for the stranger would not leave her thoughts. When she remembered that he had eaten their last crust, and that there was none left for to-morrow, as also that she had given away the shirt and trousers, she felt vexed : but when she remembered likewise the stranger's smile her heart leapt within her.

For a long time she could not sleep, but lay listening. Simon also could not sleep, and kept drawing the *kaftan* over him.

“ Simon ! ”

“ Yes ? ”

“ You have eaten our last piece of bread, and I have no more made. What we shall do to-morrow I don't know. I must beg some of neighbour Malania.”

“ Oh, but we shall manage to live and have enough,” said Simon.

For a little while after this his wife lay without speaking.

“ He seems a very fine young fellow,” she said at last ; “ only, why does he tell us nothing about himself ? ”

" He cannot, I suppose."

" Simon ! "

" Eh ? "

" We give things away, but why does no one give to us ? "

Simon was at a loss for an answer, but, remarking, " We can talk of that another time," turned over and went to sleep.

v

IN the morning Simon awoke. The children were still asleep, and his wife had gone out to borrow some bread of the neighbours. The stranger of yesterday was sitting alone on the bench, dressed in the old shirt and trousers, and his face turned upwards. And that face was even brighter than it had been the night before.

So Simon said to him :

" Well, my good friend ! The stomach craves for bread, and the body for raiment. One must earn both. Do you know any trade ? "

" No, none," replied the stranger.

Simon was rather surprised at this, and said :

" But you would try, would you not ? Men can learn anything if they wish."

" Yes, men work, and so also will I."

“ What is your name, then ? ”

“ Michael.”

“ Well, Michael, you do not tell us anything about yourself, and that is your own affair, but we must earn our living. If you work as I will teach you we will feed you.”

“ The Lord be good to you ! I will learn. Only show me how.”

So Simon took a straight wax-end, twined it on his fingers, and made a knot in it.

“ The work is not difficult,” he said. “ Watch me.”

Michael watched him, then twined the thread on his own fingers, twisted it round in a moment, and had made the knot.

Then Simon showed him how to weld, and Michael understood the art at once. Next, his master showed him how to insert a stitch and draw it tight through the seam, and that too Michael understood immediately.

Whatever Simon taught him Michael learnt readily, so that by the third day he was able to work as though he had been a cobbler all his life. He never made mistakes, and ate but little. Only, at times he would rest for a moment and look silently upwards. He never went out of doors, never spoke of his own affairs, and never jested or laughed.

Indeed, the only time he had been seen to smile was on that first evening when Matrena had got him ready the supper.

VI

DAY by day, and week by week, a year crept round, while Michael still lived with Simon and worked for him. It was spread abroad of Simon's workman that no one could sew boots so neatly and so strongly as he, and people had begun to come to Simon for boots from all the district round, so that his means increased.

One winter's day Simon and Michael were sitting working together when there came driving towards the hut a three-horsed coach-sledge, gay with bells. The two shoemakers looked through the window, and saw that the sledge had stopped opposite the hut, and that a footman had leapt from the box and was opening the door. Then a gentleman in a fur coat stepped out of the vehicle, approached Simon's dwelling, and mounted the steps. Matrena ran to meet him, and opened the door wide. The gentleman bowed his head, entered the hut, and straightened himself up again, although his head nearly touched the ceiling and he filled a whole corner of the room.

Simon rose, saluted him, and was astonished at the great man. He seldom saw such people there, for he himself was bronze in the face, Michael thin, and Matrena as wizened as a chip of wood. But this man came of another world altogether, with his ruddy, bibulous countenance, neck like a bull's, and figure of cast-iron. The gentleman breathed hard, took off his fur coat, sat down upon the bench, and said :

“ Which of you is the master bootmaker ? ”

Simon stepped forward, saying :

“ I am, your honour.”

Thereupon the gentleman shouted to his footman :

“ Hi, Thedka ! Bring me the stuff here.”

The footman entered with a parcel, which the gentleman took and laid upon the table.

“ Untie it,” he said.

The footman did so, whereupon the gentleman tapped the leather which it contained with his finger, and said to Simon :

“ Look here, bootmaker. Do you see this ? ”

“ Yes, your nobility,” answered Simon.

“ And do you know what it is ? ”

Simon fingered it a moment and replied :

“ It is good leather.”

“ ‘ Good leather ’ indeed ! ” cried the gentleman. “ You blockhead, you have never seen such

leather in your life before. It is of German make, and cost twenty roubles."

Simon was a little intimidated by this, and said :

" Ah, well, what chance do we ever get to see such leather ? "

" Well, well. But could you make me a pair of boots out of it ? "

" Possibly so, your honour."

" Possibly so ! But you must clearly understand what you are going to work upon and what you are going to make of it. I want a pair of boots which would last a year, would never tread over, and never split at the seams. If you can make me such boots, then set to work and cut out the stuff at once ; but if you cannot, then do neither of those things. I tell you beforehand that if the new pair should split or tread over before a year is out, I will clap you in prison ; but if they should *not* do so, then I will pay you ten roubles for your work."

Simon hesitated, and knew not what to say. He looked at Michael, nudged him with his elbow, and whispered :

" What do you think about it, brother ? "

For answer Michael nodded, as much as to say : " Yes, take the work."

So Simon obeyed Michael, and undertook to

make a pair of boots which would not tread over or split within a year.

Then the gentleman called the footman once more, ordered him to take off his left boot for him and stretched out his foot.

“Take my measure,” he said.

Simon sewed together a strip of paper about ten *vershoks* long and looked at it. Then he knelt down, wiped his hand carefully on his apron so as not to soil the gentleman’s sock, and started to measure. First he measured the sole, and then the instep. Next, he was going on to measure the calf, but the strip of paper would not go round it, for the muscle of the gentleman’s leg was as thick as a beam.

“Take care you don’t make them too tight in the leg,” remarked the great man.

So Simon sewed together another strip, while the gentleman sat and wriggled his toes about in his sock and the people in the hut gazed at him. Presently he caught sight of Michael.

“Who is this you have with you?” he asked.

“That is my skilled workman, who will sew your boots.”

“Look you, then,” said the gentleman to Michael, “and remember this—that you are to sew them so that they will last a year.”

Simon glanced at Michael, and saw that he was

The vershok = 1.68 inches.

not so much as looking at the gentleman, but staring into the corner behind him, as though gazing at someone. Michael gazed and gazed, until suddenly his face broke out into a smile and he brightened all over.

"What are you grinning at, you fool?" inquired the gentleman. "You had better see to it that the boots are ready when I want them."

To which Michael replied: "They shall be ready whenever wanted."

"Very well."

The gentleman put his boot on again, then his fur coat, buttoned himself up, and moved towards the door; but as he forgot to bend his head down he bumped it heavily against the lintel. He swore violently and rubbed his pate, then got into the sledge, and drove away.

"What a flint-stone!" remarked Simon. "He nearly knocked the lintel out of place with his head, yet he hardly cared!"

"How could he *not* get hardened with the life he leads?" replied Matrena. "Even death itself could not take such an iron rivet of a man."

VII

"WELL, we have undertaken the work now," continued Simon to Michael, "and we must take care

not to go amiss over it. This leather is valuable stuff, and the gentleman is short-tempered. No, there must be no mistakes. You have the sharper eyes, as well as the greater skill now in your fingers, so take these measures and cut out the stuff, while I finish sewing those toe-caps."

Michael took the leather obediently, spread it out upon the table, folded it in two, took a knife, and began to cut it.

Now, Matrena happened to approach Michael and catch sight of the way in which he was working. She was quite astonished at what she saw, for she was pretty well acquainted with the shoe-making art. In short, she perceived that he was cutting the leather, not into the ordinary boot shape, but into rounded pieces.

She felt inclined to say something, but thought to herself : " It must be that I do not understand how gentlemen's boots ought to be made. Michael must know better than I do, so I won't interfere."

When Michael had finished cutting out the two shapes, he took thread and began sewing them up, not in boot fashion, at the two ends, but at one end only, as they sew *bosoviki*!

Matrena was surprised the more at this, yet still she did not interfere, and Michael went on sewing until the dinner-hour. Then Simon rose, looked

Bosoviki. Shoes put on the feet of a corpse.

at Michael—and saw that of the gentleman's leather he had made a pair of *bosoviki*!

Simon groaned. "How is it," he thought, "that Michael has lived with me for a whole year without making a mistake, and now has made such a mistake as this? The gentleman ordered heavy-soled boots, but Michael has gone and made a pair of soleless *bosoviki*, and spoilt the leather. How shall I ever settle things with the gentleman? One cannot get such leather as that ~~every~~ day."

Then he said aloud to Michael :

"My good fellow, what have you done? You have simply ruined me. The gentleman ordered boots, but what have you gone and made instead?"

And he was just about to give Michael a ~~rating~~ for it when there came a clatter at the door-ring, and somebody knocked. They looked ~~through~~ the window, and saw that a ~~man~~ had arrived on horseback and was tying up his horse; and when, presently, the door was opened there entered ~~the~~ footman of the very gentleman himself.

"Good day to you," he said.

"Good day. What can we do for you?"

"My mistress has sent me about the boots."

"Yes. What about them?"

"This indeed—that my master will not want them now. He has been dead some time."

"What do you say?"

“ Nay, but 'tis true. He died in the sledge on the way home from your hut. The sledge had reached home, and we were just going to help him to alight, when we saw that he had slipped to the floor like a meal-bag and breathed his last. There he lay dead, and it was only with great difficulty that we lifted him out. Then my mistress sent for me and said : ‘ Go and tell the bootmaker that the gentleman who called to order the boots and left the material for them will not need them now, but that the bootmaker is to use the material to make a pair of *bosoviki*, and to make them as quickly as he can. Wait until they are made, and bring them back with you.’ So I came here at once.”

Michael gathered up the cuttings of leather from the table, and rolled them into a coil. Then he took the *bosoviki* which were lying ready, rapped them one against the other, wiped them with his apron, and gave them to the footman. The latter took them.

“ Good day, my masters,” he said, “ and good luck to you.”

VIII

ANOTHER year passed, and again two more, until Michael was now completing his sixth year with Simon. He still lived as of old. He never went

out, never spoke of himself, and had smiled twice only since he came—namely, when the goodwife had given him supper on his first arrival, and when the rich gentleman had been there. Simon was well pleased with his workman, and had never returned to the subject of where he came from. Indeed, his chief fear was lest he should go away again.

One day they were all of them sitting together at home. The goodwife was soldering iron on the stove, while the children were running about over the benches and peeping out of the windows. Near one of the latter Simon was seam-drawing, and, near the other, Michael nailing a heel on a boot.

The little boy came running along the bench to Michael, leant over his shoulder, and looked out of the window.

“ Uncle Michael,” he cried, “ just look ! There is a lady and two little girls coming to our hut, and one of the little girls is lame ! ”

As soon as the little boy said this Michael threw down his work, turned to the window, and looked into the roadway.

Simon was surprised at this. As a rule, Michael never looked out, yet now he was glued to the window and gazing intently at something. Simon too looked out, and saw a lady making straight

for the forecourt. She was well dressed, and was leading her two little girls clad in fur jackets, with shawls over their heads. These little girls were so exactly alike that it would have been difficult to distinguish the one from the other, but for the fact that one of them had something amiss with her left leg, and walked with a limp.

The lady ascended the steps to the porch, fumbled at the door, turned the handle, and entered. Then pushing the little girls in front of her, she walked forward into the hut.

“Good day to you, mistress,” she said.

“Pray excuse us, madam. What can we do for you?”

The lady sat down by the table, while the little girls pressed close to her knee, and the occupants of the hut gazed at them with curiosity.

“I want a pair of *bashmaki* made for each of these little girls to wear in the spring,” said the lady.

“Very well, madam. We have never made such small sizes before, but it could be done. You could have the boots either leather throughout or lined with linen. Here is Michael, my skilled workman.”

As Simon glanced at Michael he saw that he had thrown his work down and was sitting with

Bashmaki. Women's boots.

his eyes fixed upon the little girls. Simon was astonished. True, they made a pretty spectacle, with their black eyes, round, rosy cheeks, and smart little shawls and jackets, yet he could not understand why Michael looked at them somehow as if he knew them. However, Simon went on talking to the lady and arranging terms. The latter duly settled, he set about stitching together a paper measure, while the lady lifted the lame little girl upon her knee and said :

“ Take both the sets of measures from this little girl, and make one *bashmak* for her crooked foot and three ordinary ones. The two children take exactly the same size, for they are twins.”

Simon took the measures, and then asked concerning the little girl :

“ How comes she to be lame ? She is such a pretty little lady ! Was she born so ? ”

“ No, she was overlaid by her mother.”

Matrena, who had stepped closer in the hope of finding out who the lady and children were, put in :

“ Then you are not their mother ? ”

“ No, good mistress. In fact, they are no relation of mine at all, only adopted children.”

“ You are not their mother ! Yet you seem very fond of them ? ”

“ How could I not be fond of them ? I nursed

them both. I had a child of my own once, but God took it unto Himself. Yet I was not so fond of it as I am of them."

"And whose are they?"

IX

THEN the lady unbosomed herself, and related as follows :

"Six years ago it befell that these two little girls lost both their father and their mother in the same week. The father was buried on the Tuesday, and the mother died on the following Friday. Yes, they were left fatherless for three days, and on the third day their mother died also. At that time I and my husband were living in a country place where they and ourselves were neighbours and our yards adjoined. The father of these children—a peasant—worked as a forester. One day a tree was being cut down, when it fell upon him, and crushed out his very vitals. He was carried home, but died immediately, and these two little ones were born within a few days of his death. Poverty, loneliness—that was what they were born to, for the mother had no woman, old or young, to attend upon her. She was alone when she took to bed, and alone too when she died.

" Next morning I chanced to go to pay her a neighbourly visit, and when I entered the hut I saw that the poor woman was already stiff and cold, and that in her death agony she had crushed one child and bent her foot crooked. Well, I sent for help, and they buried her. They were kind-hearted people ; but now that the little girls were left orphans, which of us was to take them ? I alone of our women was then nursing a child—had been nursing my first little one, a boy, for eight weeks past. So for the time being I took charge of the twins also, after the peasants had debated together as to what should be done with them and said to me, ' Do you keep them for the present, Maria, and that will give us time to settle something.' I began by nursing the uninjured child only, since I did not expect the other one to live. Then I thought to myself : ' Why should this little one's angel spirit be left to fade away ? ' So, filled with compassion for it also, I nurtured the two as I did my own child. Yet God ordained that, although I should nourish these two children to childhood, I should bury my own little one within its second year ; and God has never given me another one. In time my means increased, and now I am lodging at the mill here with the miller. I have a good income and live comfortably, but, alas ! I have no children of my own. How,

then, I could ever bear to live alone without these little ones, or how I could ever rest without them to love and care for, I cannot think ! They are to me as wax is to the candle,"—and the lady drew the lame child to her with the one hand as with the other she wiped the tears from her cheeks. "Of a surety," she added, "it is a true saying which says : 'Without father or mother we may live, but without God—never.' "

Thus they talked for a while among themselves, after which the lady rose to depart. Her hosts saw her to the door, and then glanced at Michael. He was sitting with his hands folded upon his knees as he gazed intently upwards and smiled.

X

SIMON approached him. "What is it, Michael ?" he said.

Michael rose from the bench, laid aside his work, took off his apron, and bowed to the master and his wife.

"Pardon me, good master and mistress," he said. "God has pardoned me. Do you also pardon me ?"

Then Simon and his wife saw that light was proceeding from Michael. Simon bowed low before him in his turn, and said :

" Michael, I see that you are more than simple man, and that I may not detain or question you. Only tell me one thing. Why is it that when I first found you and brought you home you were downcast of countenance, but smiled immediately that my wife offered you supper, and became thenceforth brighter ? Again, why did you smile the second time when the gentleman was ordering the boots, and became even brighter than before ? And lastly, why did you smile the third time and become bright all over when the lady brought the little girls hither ? Tell me, Michael, why you smiled those three times, and why this light is shining from you now ? "

Then Michael answered him :

" This light is shining from me now because I have been punished and God has pardoned me again. And I smiled those three times because it was laid upon me that I should learn three words of God, and those three words I have now learnt. The first word I learnt when your wife had compassion upon me. That is why I smiled the first time. The second word I learnt when the rich man was ordering the boots. That is why I smiled the second time. And the third and last word I learnt just now when I beheld the little girls. That is why I smiled the third time."

Then Simon said :

" Tell me also, Michael, why God punished you, and what those three words of God may be, that I too may learn them ? "

And Michael answered :

" God punished me because I disobeyed Him. I was an angel in Heaven, and disobeyed God. He sent me down to earth to bear away a woman's soul. To earth I flew, and there saw the woman lying sick with two little twin girls. The children were stirring beside their mother, yet she could not nurse them. Then she saw me, and understood that God had sent me to fetch away her soul. Weeping, she cried out : ' Angel of God, they have just buried my husband, who was killed by a tree in the forest. I have neither sister nor aunt nor grandmother, so that there is no one to bring up my little ones. Do not take away my soul, but leave me to rear my children, and to set them on their feet. Little children cannot live without either father or mother.' So I hearkened to the mother, laid one child upon her breast, gave the other one into her arms, and ascended again to God in Heaven. I flew to God and said : ' I could not take away the soul from that childing mother. The father has been killed by a tree, and the mother has just been delivered of twins. She besought me not to take away her soul, saying : ' Let me rear my children, and set them

on their feet. Little children cannot live without father or mother." So I did not take away the mother's soul.' Then God said to me : ' Go thou and fetch away the soul of that childing woman, and thou shalt learn three words. Thou shalt learn both what that is which dwelleth in men, and what that is which is not given to men, and what that is whereby men live. When thou hast learnt these words thou shalt return to Heaven.' So I flew back to earth, and took away the soul of the childing woman. Then I rose above the village, and tried to bear the soul to God, but a wind caught me, so that my wings hung down and were blown from me, and the soul returned alone to Him, while I myself fell to earth again by the roadside."

XI

Now that Simon and Matrena understood at last whom it was that they had clothed and fed and taken in, they wept both with fear and with joy. But the angel went on :

" Thus I was left naked and alone in the open fields. Never before had I known human need, never before had I known cold or hunger ; yet now I had become a man. I was freezing and hungry, and knew not what to do. Then I saw

by the roadside a chapel built for God, and approached God's building, hoping to take refuge there ; but it was barred and locked, and I could not enter. Then I sat down behind it, to shield myself from the wind. Evening came, and I felt cold and hungry, and in pain all over. Suddenly I listened. A man was coming along the road, carrying a pair of boots in his hand, and talking to himself. Then for the first time since I became a man I saw a deathlike human face, and that face seemed to me horrible, and I turned from it. But as I did so I heard this man talking to himself concerning how he should protect his body from the winter's cold and feed his wife and children, and I thought to myself : ' Here am I perishing of cold and hunger, while here at the same moment is this man thinking of how he shall clothe his wife and himself in sheepskin and feed himself and his family with bread ! Surely I may look for help from him ! ' The man caught sight of me, knit his brows—becoming still more horrible as he did so—and passed on. I was in despair. Suddenly, however, I heard him returning. I peered forth, and could scarcely recognise him as the same. In his face, before, there had been death, but now the face had come suddenly to life ; and in that face I saw God. The man came to me, clothed me, took me away with him, and

conducted me to his home. As I entered his house there came out to meet us a woman, and she began to speak. The woman seemed to me even more dreadful than the man. She wished to cast me into the cold again, yet I knew that she would die if she did so. Then all at once her husband reminded her of God, and in a moment she became changed ; so that when she had given us supper, and was sitting gazing upon me, I gazed at her in return—and, behold ! there was no longer death in her face, but life ; and in her I recognized God.

“ Then I remembered the first word of God—‘ Thou shalt learn what that is which dwelleth in men.’ And I knew that the thing which dwelleth in men is Love, and felt glad that God had seen fit to reveal to me that which He had promised ; so that I smiled for the first time. But I had not yet learnt all. I had still to learn what that is which is not given to men, and what that is whereby men live.

“ So I came to dwell with you, and had so dwelt for a year, when there entered hither a man to order boots—boots such as might last for a year without treading over or splitting. As I gazed at him, suddenly I saw standing behind his shoulders my comrade the Angel of Death. No one but I saw that Angel, yet I knew him, and knew also

that the sun would not have set before the soul of this rich man would be required of him. And I thought to myself : 'Here is this man making provision for a year hence, though knowing not, all the time, that he has not so much as until nightfall to live.' Then I remembered the second word of God—'Thou shalt learn what that is which is not given to men.'

"Already I had learnt what that is 'which dwelleth in men. Now also I had learnt what that is which is not given to men : for it is not given to men to know what is necessary for their bodies. Then I smiled the second time. I rejoiced that I had seen my comrade angel, and that God had revealed to me His second word.

" Yet I had not learnt all. I had still to learn what that is whereby men live. So I lived on, and waited for the time when God should reveal to me His last word. And during my sixth year with you there came hither a woman with twin girls, and I recognised the little girls, and knew that they had been preserved alive. As I recognised them I thought to myself : 'The mother besought me for her children, and I hearkened to her, thinking that without father or mother the little ones would die : yet this woman, a stranger, has fed and reared them.' And when I saw the woman moved to pity for the children and

shedding tears over them I recognised in her the living God, and understood what that is whereby men live. I knew that God had revealed to me His third and last word—and had pardoned me. Then for the third time I smiled."

XII

SUDDENLY the Angel's form became stripped of clothing, and robed wholly in light, so that the eye could not bear to look upon him, while his voice became more resonant, as though it were proceeding, not from his own mouth, but from Heaven itself. And the Angel said :

" Yes, I learnt that every man lives, not by taking thought for himself, but by Love.

" It was not given to the chililing woman to know what was needful for the preservation of her children's lives. It was not given to the rich man to know what was needful for his body. Nor is it given unto any man to know whether, before the sun shall have set, it may be boots for his living body or *bosoviki* for his dead body that he shall require.

" When I was a man, my life was preserved to me, not by taking thought for myself, but by the love which dwelt in a passer-by and his wife, so

that they could feel for me pity and affection. Again, the two orphans were preserved alive, not by any thought which was taken for them, but by the love which dwelt in the heart of a strange woman, so that she could feel for them pity and affection. For, indeed, all men live, not by the thought which they may take for themselves, but by the love which dwells in all mankind.

“ I had known before that God gave life to men, and that He would have them live ; but now I understood another thing.

“ I understood that God would not have men live apart from one another—wherefore He had not revealed to them what was needful for each one : but that He would have them live in unity —wherefore He had revealed to them only what was needful both for themselves and for their fellows *together*.

“ Yes, at last I understood that men only *appear* to live by taking thought for themselves, but that in reality they live by Love alone. He that dwelleth in Love dwelleth in God, and God in him : for God is Love.”

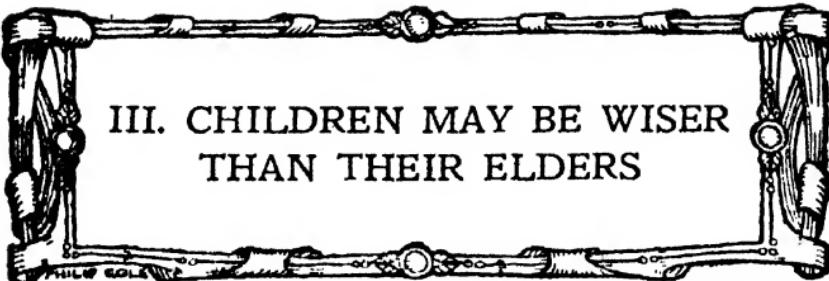
Then the Angel sang a hymn of praise to God, and the hut trembled at the sound of his voice, while the roof parted in the middle, and a pillar

of fire shot up from earth to Heaven. Simon and his wife and children fell down upon their faces in adoration, and as they did so wings burst forth from the Angel's back, and he soared away into the sky.

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When Simon opened his eyes again, the hut was as it had been before, and there was no one there but his own household.





III. CHILDREN MAY BE WISER THAN THEIR ELDERS

HOLY WEEK fell early. Sledging was only just over, and snow still lay in the shelter of the courtyards, or, melting, ran in rivulets down the village street. A large pool had oozed from beneath the slush, and collected in an alley-way between two yards. From those yards there hied them to this pool a couple of little girls—an elder and a younger. Their mothers had just dressed them in brand-new frocks (the younger one in a blue frock, and the elder in a yellow, embroidered one), and tied red handkerchiefs over their heads. The pair issued forth after dinner, and betook them to the side of the pool, where they first of all showed each other their fine clothes, and then fell to playing. They thought they would like to wade across the pool, and accordingly the younger one started to do so, shoes and all. The elder one, however, cried: "Don't go in like that, Malasha, or your mother will scold you. Take off your shoes first, and I will do the same."

So they took off their shoes, tucked up their frocks, and waded across the pool from opposite sides. Malasha went in over her ankles, and called out : " It is so deep, Akulka dear. I am afraid." " No, no," replied the other, " it can't get any deeper. Come straight across to me." So they drew nearer. Then Akulka said : " Mind, Malasha, and don't splash me. Go gently." The words were hardly out of her mouth when Malasha gave a stamp with her foot, and splashed the water on Akulka's frock. It was splashed all over, and so were her eyes and nose.

When Akulka saw the stains on her frock she was very angry with Malasha, scolded her furiously, and ran towards her to give her a slap. Malasha, however, was frightened when she saw the damage she had done, and, jumping out of the pool, ran home.

Now, Akulka's mother happened to pass that way, and saw her daughter with her frock all splashed and her petticoat muddied over. " How did you manage to get so dirty, you bad girl ? " she asked. " Malasha splashed me. She did it on purpose," answered her little daughter. So Akulka's mother caught Malasha, and spanked her soundly, so that the street rang with her weeping.

That brought her mother out. " What are you

beating my child for f^{\prime} " she cried angrily to her neighbour, and the pair began bandying words. The peasants came out of their huts, and a small crowd collected in the street. Every one shouted, but no one listened, as the crowd wrangled and wrangled. At last one peasant pushed against another one, and a fight was imminent, when an old woman—Akulka's grandmother—appeared on the scene.

Running into the midst of the peasants, she cried protestingly : " Now then, good people ! Is this the way in which this Holy Week should be spent ? You ought all of you to be giving thanks to God, and not conspiring to sin like this." But the peasants would not listen to her, and almost pushed her off her legs. Indeed, she would never have dissuaded the two peasants from fighting but for Malasha and Akulka themselves.

While the women had been quarrelling, Akulka had gone in and wiped her frock, and then came out again to the pool in the alley-way. There she picked up a small stone, and began to dig out the earth by the side of the pool. While thus engaged, she was joined by Malasha, who began to help her to dig out a little channel with a chip of wood.

The peasants were just starting to fight, when the water escaped out of the pool through the little channel dug by the children, and ran out

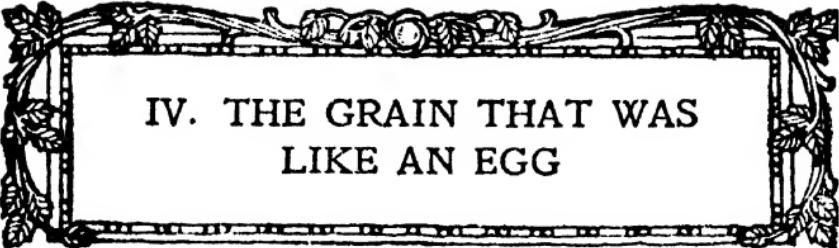
into the street to the spot where the old woman was trying to separate the two peasants. The little girls came darting out of the alley-way, one on each side of the tiny stream. "Stop it, Malasha! Stop it!" cried Akulka. Malasha also was trying to say something, but could not speak for laughter.

Thus the two little girls came running along, laughing at the chip of wood as it bobbed about in the rivulet—and ran straight into the midst of the peasants. As soon as the old woman saw them she cried to the two disputants: "Have some respect for God! Here are you gathered together to fight about these same little girls, yet they themselves have long ago forgotten the whole matter, and are playing together again in peace and goodwill. They are wiser than you."

The two disputants looked at the little girls, and felt ashamed of themselves, while the other peasants burst out laughing at their own folly, and dispersed to their huts.

"If ye do not become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven."





IV. THE GRAIN THAT WAS LIKE AN EGG

ONCE upon a time some children found, in a ravine, a little round something that was like an egg ; but it also had a groove down the middle, and so was like a grain of corn. A passer-by saw this something in the children's hands, and bought it off them for a *piatak*. Then he took it away to town and sold it to the Tsar as a curiosity.

The Tsar sent for his wise men, and commanded them to examine the little round something and to say if it was an egg or a grain of corn. The wise men pondered and pondered, but could not solve the problem.

So the little round something was left lying on a window-sill, and a hen flew in, pecked at the little round something, and pecked a hole in it ; so that everyone could now see that it was a grain of corn. Wherefore the wise men hastened to return and tell the Tsar that the little round something was nothing else than a grain of rye.

The Tsar was astonished, and commanded the wise men to ascertain where and when this grain

Piatak. A copper coin worth five copecks (1½d.).

was grown. So the wise men pondered and pondered, and searched their books, but could discover nothing. They returned to the Tsar, therefore, and said : " We cannot resolve those two questions, for we find nothing written in our books about them. But let your Imperial Majesty cause inquiry to be made among the peasantry, lest haply any one of them has ever heard from his elders where and when this grain was sown."

So the Tsar sent and commanded a very ancient elder of the peasantry to be brought to him. Such a one was searched for, and conducted to the Tsar's presence. The old man was livid and toothless, and walked with difficulty on crutches.

The Tsar showed him the grain, which was unlike anything that the old man had ever seen before. Indeed, he could hardly see it now, but half-examined it with his eyes, half-felt it with his hands. Then the Tsar asked him :

" Do you know, good grandfather, where this grain was grown ? Did you yourself ever sow similar grain in your field, or did you ever in your time buy similar grain ? "

The old man was deaf, and heard and understood only with great difficulty, so that he was slow in answering.

"No," he said at last, "it never befell me to sow such grain in my field, nor to reap such grain, nor to buy it. When we bought corn it was all of fine, small grain. But," he continued, "you would do well to ask my father. He may have heard where such a grain as this one was grown."

So the Tsar sent the old man to fetch his father, and commanded the latter to be brought to him. The father of the old man was duly found and conducted to the presence, and he entered it hobbling on one crutch only. The Tsar showed him the grain, and, as the old man still had the use of his eyes, he was able to see it quite clearly. Then the Tsar asked him :

"Do you know, my good old man, where such a grain was grown? Did you ever yourself sow similar grain in your field? Or did you ever in your time buy similar grain from anywhere?"

The old man was a little hard of hearing, yet he could hear much better than his son.

"No," he said, "it never befell me to sow or to reap such grain; no, nor yet to buy it, since in my time money had not begun to be used in trade. Every one grew his own bread, and, as regarded other needs, one shared with another. I do not know where such a grain as this one can have been grown, for, although our grain was larger than

grain is now and gave more flour, I have never before seen such a grain. But I have heard my father say that in his time better corn was reaped than in mine, and it was larger and yielded more flour. You would do well to send and ask him."

So the Tsar sent for the father of this old man, and the father was found and conducted to the presence. He entered it without crutches at all—walking easily, in fact—while his eyes were still bright and he spoke distinctly. The Tsar showed him the grain, and the old man looked at it and turned it over and over.

"Ah," he said, "but it is many a long day since I have seen a grain of olden times like this one!" Then he nibbled the grain and chewed a morsel of it. "It is the same!" he exclaimed.

"Tell me, then, grandfather," said the Tsar, "where and when such grain as this was grown? Did you yourself ever sow such grain in your field? Or did you ever in your time buy it anywhere of others?"

Then the old man replied :

"In my time such grain as this was reaped everywhere. It was on such grain that I myself lived and supported others. Such grain have I both sowed and reaped and ground."

And the Tsar asked him again :

"Tell me, good grandfather, was it ever your custom to *buy* such grain anywhere, or always to sow it yourself in your own field?"

The old man smiled.

"In my time," he said, "no one would ever have thought of committing so great a sin as to buy or to sell grain. We knew nothing of money. Each man had as much grain as he wanted."

Then the Tsar asked him again :

"Tell me, good grandfather, where it was that you sowed such grain—where, indeed, your field was?"

And the old man replied :

"My field was God's earth. Where I ploughed, that was my field. The earth was free, and no man called it his own. All that he called his own was the labour of his own hands."

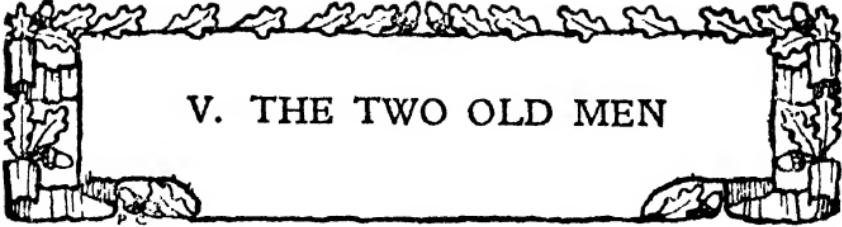
"Tell me now," said the Tsar, "two other things : firstly, why it is that such grain once grew, but grows not now ; and secondly, why it is that your grandson walked on two crutches, and your son on one, while you yourself walk easily without any at all, and have, moreover, your eyes still bright and your teeth still strong and your speech still clear and kindly. Tell me the reason for these two things."

Then answered the old man :

"The reason for those two things is that men

have ceased to live by their labour alone, and have begun to hanker after their neighbours' goods. In the olden days they lived not so. In the olden days they lived according to God's word. They were masters of their own, and coveted not what belonged to another."





V. THE TWO OLD MEN

I

“The woman saith unto him, Sir, I see that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain ; and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what : we know what we worship : for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth : for the Father seeketh such to worship Him.”

(JOHN iv. 19-23.)

Two old men took it into their heads to go and pray to God in ancient Jerusalem. One of them was a rich peasant named Efim Tarassitch Shevel-off, and the other was a poor man named Elijah Bodroff.

Efim was a sober man. He drank no *vodka*, smoked no tobacco, took no snuff, had never breathed an oath in his life, and was altogether a

strict and conscientious citizen. Twice he had served a term as *starosta*, and left office without a figure wrong in his books. He had a large family (his two sons as well as a grandson were married) and they all lived together. In person he was an upright, vigorous *muzhik*, with a beard only begun to be streaked with grey now that he had attained his seventieth year. Old Elijah, on the other hand, was a man neither rich nor poor, who, formerly a travelling carpenter, had now settled down and taken to bee-keeping. One of his sons earned his living at home, and the other one away. He was a good-hearted, cheerful old fellow, and drank *vodka*, smoked tobacco, took snuff, and loved a good song. None the less, he was of peaceable disposition, and lived on excellent terms both with his household and his neighbours. In himself he was a man of medium height, with a swarthy complexion and curly beard. Moreover, like his holy namesake, the Prophet Elijah, he was bald.

The two old men had long ago agreed to go upon this pilgrimage together, yet Efim had never been able to find time from his business. As soon as he had got one thing out of hand he would find himself hatching a new scheme. Now he would be marrying a granddaughter, now expecting his younger son home from military service, now planning to erect a new hut.

One day the old men met at a festival, and seated themselves together on a bench.

"Well," said Elijah, "when are we going to carry out that long-agreed-upon scheme of ours?"

Efim frowned. "We must wait a little yet," he said. "This last year has been a heavy one for me. When I planned to build that new hut I reckoned it would cost me about a hundred roubles only, but already the estimate is rising up to three times that amount, and it hasn't come in yet. I must certainly wait until the summer. *Then, if God pleases, we will go.*"

"Well," replied Elijah, "it seems to me that we ought not to put it off any longer, but to go now. Spring is the very time for it."

"Time or no time, the work is begun now. How can I go and leave it?"

"But have you no one to leave in charge? Surely your son could see to it?"

"He indeed! Why, that eldest son of mine is perfectly useless. He would spoil it all."

"No, no, my old friend. Even if you and I died to-morrow, the world would still go on without us. Your son only needs a little teaching."

"That may be; yet I want to see the work finished under my own eyes."

"Pooh, my dear sir! One never really gets to the end of things. Why only the other day our

women at home were washing the linen and getting ready for the festival—first one thing having to be done, and then another, as if there would never be an end to it all—when at last my eldest daughter-in-law (and she is a clever woman) exclaimed : ‘Never mind if the festival is coming on and we shan’t be ready. However much we do, we can’t do everything.’ ”

Efim reflected a moment—then said :

“ I have laid out a lot of money already on this building scheme, and it would hardly do to set forth on a journey with empty hands. A hundred roubles is no light sum to raise, you know.”

Elijah smiled.

“ Yes, you must be careful,” he said. “ Why, your income is ten times as much as mine, yet you worry far more about money than I do. Look at me. Merely tell me when to start, and, little though I possess, I shall be there.”

Efim smiled in his turn.

“ Are you such a rich man, then, after all ? ” he said. “ Where is it all going to come from ? ”

“ Oh, I shall scrape it together somehow—raise it somehow. If there is no other way of doing so, I shall sell a dozen of my range of bee-hives to a neighbour. He has long been after them.”

“ And then the swarms will turn out well, and you will be sorry for it.”

"Sorry for it? No, no. I have never been sorry for anything in my life except for my sins. There is nothing worth troubling about except one's soul."

"That may be; yet it is awkward to have things go wrong at home."

"But it is still more awkward to have things go wrong with one's soul. Come now! You have as good as promised me, so we must really go. It would be only right of us to do so."

II

THUS Elijah won over his comrade. Next morning Efim took counsel with himself, and then went to see Elijah.

"Yes, we will go very soon now," he said. "You were quite right. In life or in death we are in God's hands. We ought to go while we are still alive and well."

A week later the two got themselves ready. Efim always kept his money at home, and of it he took 190 roubles for the journey, and left 200 for the old woman. Elijah likewise made his preparations. He sold the neighbour ten out of his range of bee-hives, together with whatever stock of honey they might produce. That brought

him in seventy roubles. Another thirty he swept together from one corner and another. His wife gave up the whole of her funeral savings, and their daughter-in-law did the same.

Efim confided the entire direction of his affairs at home to his eldest son, telling him which crops to pull while he was away, and how much of them, where to spread the manure, and how to build and roof the new hut. He thought of everything, left directions for everything. Elijah, on the other hand, merely told his old wife to be careful to collect such young bees as might leave the hives which he had disposed of, and deliver full tale of them to the neighbour. On other domestic matters he said not a word. Circumstances themselves would show what was to be done, and how it was to be done, as circumstances arose. Housewives, he thought, know their own business best.

So the two old men made them ready for the journey. Home-made cakes were baked, wallets contrived, new leggings cut out, new boots procured, and spare shoes provided. Then they set off. Their respective households escorted them to the parish boundary, and there took leave of them. Thus the old men were fairly launched upon their way.

Elijah walked along in high spirits, and forgot

all his domestic concerns immediately he had left the village. His only cares were how to beguile the way for his companion, to avoid uttering a single churlish word, and to arrive at his destination and return thence in perfect peace and goodwill. As he walked along he whispered silent prayers to himself or thought over his past life so far as he could remember it. Whether he fell in with a fellow traveller, or whether he were begging for a night's lodging, with each and all he endeavoured to associate amicably and with a pious word upon his lips. As he went he rejoiced in heart. One thing, however, he could not do. He had resolved to leave off tobacco, and to that end had left his pipe at home—and he missed it sadly. On the way a man gave him one. Thereafter, lest he should cause his fellow traveller to stumble, he would fall behind him and smoke quietly.

As for Efim, he walked circumspectly, determined to do nothing amiss and speak no light word, since frivolity was foreign to his soul. Likewise, his domestic cares never left his thoughts. He was for ever thinking of how things might be going at home and of the directions he had given to his son, as well as wondering if those directions were being carried out. Whenever he saw peasants setting potatoes or carting manure he at once

thought to himself : “ Is my son doing as I instructed him ? ” Sometimes, indeed, he felt like turning back to give fresh directions and see them carried out in person.

III

WHEN the old men had been on the tramp five weeks their home-made bast shoes gave out, and they had to buy new ones. In time they arrived at the country of the *Khokhli*, where, although by this time they were far from the district where they were known and had for some time past been accustomed to pay for their board and lodging each night, these good people vied with each other in entertaining them. They took them in and fed them, yet would accept no money, but sped them on their way with food in their wallets and sometimes new bast shoes as well. Thus the old men covered 700 versts with ease, until they had crossed another province and arrived in a bare and poverty-stricken land. Here the inhabitants were willing to take them in, and would accept no money for their night's lodging, yet ceased to provide them with food. Nowhere was even

Khokhli. The “ Tufted Men ”—a nickname given to the Ruthenians.

bread given to the travellers, and occasionally it could not be bought. Last year, the people said, nothing had grown. Those who had been rich had ploughed up their land and sold out ; those who had been only moderately rich were now reduced to nothing ; while those who had been poor had either perished outright or emigrated, with the exception of a few, who still eked out a wretched existence somehow. During the past winter, indeed, such people had lived on chaff and weeds.

One evening the old men stayed the night at a hamlet, and, having bought fifteen pounds of bread, went on before dawn, so as to get as far as possible while it was yet cool. They covered ten versts, and then sat down by a brook, ladled some water into a bowl, soaked and ate some bread, and washed their feet. As they sat and rested Elijah pulled out his horn tobacco-box, whereupon Efim shook his head in disapproval.

“ Why not throw that rubbish away ? ” he said.

“ Nay, but if a failing has got the better of one, what is one to do ? ” replied Elijah with a shrug of his shoulders.

Then they got up and went on for another ten versts. The day had now become intensely hot, and after reaching and passing through a large village, Elijah grew weary, and longed to rest

again and have a drink. Efim, however, refused to stop, for he was the better walker of the two, and Elijah often found it difficult to keep up with him.

“ Oh, for a drink ! ” said Elijah.

“ Well, go and have one. I myself can do without.”

Elijah stopped. “ Do not wait for me,” he said. “ I will run to that hut there and beg a drink, and be after you again in a twinkling.”

“ Very well,” said Efim, and he went on along the road alone, while Elijah turned aside to the hut.

When he came to it he saw that it was a small, plastered cabin, with its lower part black and the upper part white. The plaster was peeling off in patches, and had evidently not been renewed for many a long day, while in one side of the roof there was a large hole. The way to the hut door lay through a yard, and when Elijah entered the latter he saw a man—thin, clean-shaven, and clad only in a shirt and breeches, after the fashion of the *Khokhli*—lying stretched beside a trench. Somehow he looked as though he were lying there for coolness’ sake, yet the sun was glaring down upon him. There he lay, but not as though asleep. Elijah hailed him and asked for a drink, but the man returned no answer. “ He must be either ill

or uncivil," thought Elijah, and went on to the door of the hut, within which he could hear the voices of two children crying. He knocked first with the iron ring of the door-knocker, and called out "Mistress!" No one answered. Again he knocked with his pilgrim's staff and called out, "Good Christians!" Nothing stirred within the hut. "Servants of God!" he cried once more, and once more received no response. He was just on the point of turning to depart when he heard from behind the door a sound as of someone gasping. Had some misfortune come upon these people? He felt that he must find out, and stepped inside.

IV

THE door was unlocked, and the handle turned easily. Passing through a little entrance-porch, the inner door of which stood open, Elijah saw on the left a stove, and in front of him the living portion of the room. In one corner stood an *ikon* frame and a table, while behind the table stood a wooden bench. Upon this bench was seated an old woman—bareheaded, and clad in a simple garment. Her head was bowed upon her arms, while beside her stood a little boy—thin and waxen

ikon. A sacred image or picture reverenced by the peasants.

in the face—who kept clutching her by the sleeve and crying loudly as he besought her for something. The air in the hut was stifling to the last degree. Elijah stepped forward and caught sight of a second woman stretched on a shelf-bunk behind the stove. She was lying face downwards, with her eyes closed, but moaned at intervals as she threw out one of her legs and drew it back again—with a writhing movement. An oppressive odour came from the bunk, and it was clear that she had no one to attend to her. All at once the old woman raised her head and caught sight of the stranger.

“What do you want?” she asked in the Little-Russian dialect. “What do you want? Nay, my good man, we have nothing for you here.”

None the less, Elijah understood her dialect, and took a step nearer.

“I am a servant of God,” he said, “who crave of you a drink of water.”

“Nay, but there is no one to get it for you,” she replied. “You must take what you require and go.”

“And is there no one well enough to wait upon this poor woman?” went on Elijah, presently.

“No, no one. Her man is dying in the yard yonder, and there are only ourselves besides.”

The little boy had been stricken to silence by

the entry of a stranger, but now the old woman had no sooner finished speaking than he clutched her again by the sleeve.

“ Some bread, some bread, granny ! ” he cried, and burst out weeping.

Elijah was about to question the old woman further when a peasant staggered into the hut, supporting himself by the wall as he did so, and tried to sit down upon the bench. Missing his footing in the attempt, he rolled backwards upon the floor. He made no attempt to rise, but struggled to say something, speaking a word only at a time, with a rest after each one.

“ We have sickness here,” he gasped, “ and famine too. That little one there ”—and he nodded towards the boy—“ is dying of hunger.” He burst into tears.

Elijah unslung his wallet from his shoulders, freed his arms from the strap, and lowered the wallet to the floor. Then he lifted it, placed it on the bench, unfastened it, and, taking out some bread and a knife, cut off a hunch and held it out towards the peasant. Instead of taking it, the man made a movement of his head in the direction of the little children (there was a little girl there also, behind the stove), as much as to say, “ Nay, give it to *them*.” Accordingly Elijah handed the piece to the little boy, who no sooner caught sight of it

than he darted forward, seized it in his tiny hands, and ran off, with his nose fairly buried in the crumb. At the same moment the little girl came out from behind the stove, and simply glued her eyes upon the bread. To her too Elijah handed a piece, and then cut off another for the old woman, who took it and began to chew it at once.

"I beseech you, get us some water," she said presently. "Our mouths are parched. I tried to draw some water this morning (or this afternoon—I hardly know which), but fell down under its weight. The bucket will be there now if you could only bring it."

Upon Elijah asking where the well was, the old woman told him, and he went off. He found the bucket there as she had described, brought some water, and gave each of them a drink. Now that they had had the water, the children managed to devour a second hunch apiece, and the old woman too, but the peasant would not touch anything. "I do not feel inclined," he said. As for his wife, she laying tossing herself to and fro on the bunk, unconscious of what was passing. Elijah returned to a shop in the village, bought some millet, salt, meal, and butter, and hunted out a hatchet. Then, having cut some firewood, he lighted the stove with the little girl's help, cooked some soup and porridge, and gave these poor people a meal.

v

THE peasant ate but little, but the old woman did better, while the two children cleared a bowlful apiece, and then went to sleep in one another's arms. Presently the man and the old woman began telling Elijah how it had all come upon them.

"We used to make a living," they said, "poor though it was ; but when the crop failed last year we found we had exhausted our stock by the autumn, and had to eat anything and everything we could get. Then we tried to beg of neighbours and kind-hearted folk. At first they gave, but later they began to refuse us. There were many who would have given, but they had nothing to give. In time, too, it began to hurt us to beg, for we were in debt to everyone—in debt for money, meal, and bread."

"I tried to get work," went on the peasant, "but there was almost none to be got. Everywhere there were starving men struggling for work. A man might get a little job one day, and then spend the next two in looking for another. The old woman and the little girl walked many a long distance for alms, though what they received was little enough, seeing that many, like ourselves, had not even bread. Still, we managed to feed

ourselves somehow, and hoped to win through to the next season. But by the time spring came people had ceased to give at all, and sickness came upon us, and things grew desperate. One day we might have a bite of something to eat, and then nothing at all for two more. At last we took even to eating grass ; and whether that was the cause or something else, the wife fell ill as you see. There she lay on the bed, while I myself had come to the end of my strength, and had no means of reviving it."

" Yes, I was the only one who held up," went on the old woman. " Yet hunger was pulling me down as well, and I was getting weaker every day. The little girl was in the same plight as I was, and taking to having nervous fits. One day I wanted to send her to a neighbour's, but she would not go. She just crept behind the stove and refused. The day before yesterday another neighbour came and looked in ; but as soon as she saw that we were ill and starving she turned round and went away again. You see, her own husband had just died, and she had nothing to give her little children to eat. So, when you came, we were just lying here—waiting for death to come."

Elijah listened to their tale, and decided that, as it was doubtful whether he could overtake Efim that day, he had better spend the night here. The

next morning he rose and did the housework, as if he himself were the master. Then he helped the old woman to make dough, and lighted the stove. After that he accompanied the little girl to some neighbours' huts, to try and borrow what else was needed, but was unsuccessful everywhere. No one had anything at all—everything had been disposed of for food, down to household necessities and even clothes. Consequently Elijah had to provide what was needed himself—to buy some things and make others. He spent the whole day like this, and then the next, and then a third. The little boy recovered himself, and began to walk along the bench and to frisk about Elijah, while the little girl grew quite merry and helped in everything. She was for ever running after Elijah with her "*Didu, Didusiu!*!" The old woman likewise picked up again, and went out to see a neighbour or two, while as for the husband, he progressed so far as to walk a little with the help of the wall. Only his wife still lay sick. Yet on the third day she too opened her eyes and asked for food.

"Now," thought Elijah to himself, "I must be off. I had not expected to be detained so long."

Didu, etc. Little Russian for "*Diadia, Diadiushka!*!" ("Uncle, dear Uncle!").

VI

IT chanced, however, that the fourth (the next) day would be the first of the *rozgovieni*, or days of flesh-eating, and Elijah thought to himself: "How would it be if I were to break my fast with these people, buy them some presents for the festival, and then go on my way in the evening?" So he went to the village again, and bought milk, white meal, and lard. Everyone, from the old woman downwards, boiled and baked that day, and next morning Elijah went to Mass, returned to the hut, and broke his fast with his new friends. That day, too, the wife got up from her bed, and walked about a little. As for the husband, he shaved himself, put on a clean shirt (hastily washed for him by the old woman, since he had only one), and went off to the village to beg the forbearance of a rich peasant to whom both corn- and pasture-land had been mortgaged, and to pray that he would surrender them before the harvest. Towards evening the husband returned with a dejected air, and burst into tears. The rich peasant, it seemed, had refused his request, saying, "Bring me the money first."

Elijah took counsel with himself again. "How are these people to live without land?" he thought. "Strangers will come and reap the

crops, and leave nothing at all for them, since the crops are mortgaged. However good the rye may turn out to be (and Mother Earth is looking well now), strangers will come and harvest it all, and these people can look to receive nothing, seeing that their one *desiatin* of corn-land is in fee to the rich peasant. If I were to go away now, they would come to rack and ruin again."

He was so distressed by these thoughts that he did not leave that evening, but deferred his departure until the next morning. He went to sleep in the yard as usual, and lay down after he had said his prayers. Nevertheless his eyes would not close. "Yes, I ought to go," he thought, "for I have spent too much time and money here already. I am very sorry for these people, but one cannot benefit everyone. I meant only to give them a drop of water and a slice of bread ; yet see what that slice has led to ! Still," he went on, "why not redeem their corn- and meadow-land while I am about it ? Yes, and buy a cow for the children and a horse for the father's harvesting ! Ah, well, you have got your ideas into a fine tangle, Elijah Kuzmitch ! You are dragging your anchors, and can't make head or tail of things."

So he raised himself, took his cloak from under his head, turned it over until he had found his horn tobacco-box, and smoked to see if that would

clear his thoughts. He pondered and pondered, yet could come to no decision. He wanted to go, and at the same time felt sorry for these people. Which way was it to be ? He really did not know. At last he refolded his cloak under his head and stretched himself out again. He lay like that until the cocks were crowing, and then dozed off to sleep. Suddenly someone seemed to have aroused him, and he found himself fully dressed and girded with wallet and staff—found himself walking out of the entrance-gates of the yard. But those gates were so narrow, somehow, that even a single person could hardly get through them. First his wallet caught on one of the gates, and when he tried to release it, the gate on the other side caught his legging and tore it right open. Turning to release it also, he found that, after all, it was not the gate that was holding it, but the little girl, and that she was crying out, "*Didiu ! Didiusiu !* Give me some bread !" Then he looked at his leg again, and there was the little boy also holding on to the legging, while their father and the old woman were looking from a window. He awoke, and said to himself : " I will buy out their land for them to-morrow—yes, and buy them a horse and cow as well. Of what avail is it to go across the sea to seek Christ if all the time I lose the Christ that is within me here ? Yes, I

must put these people straight again"—and he fell asleep until morning. He rose betimes, went to the rich peasant, and redeemed both the rye-crop and the hay. Then he went and bought a scythe (for these people's own scythe had been sold, together with everything else), and took it home with him. He set a man to mow the hay, while he himself went hunting among the *muzhiks* until he found a horse and cart for sale at the innkeeper's. He duly bargained for and bought it, and then continued his way in search of a cow. As he was walking along the street he overtook two *Khokhli* women, who were chatting volubly to each other as they went. He could hear that it was of himself they were speaking, for one of the women said :

“ When he first came they could not tell at all what he was, but supposed him to be a pilgrim. He only came to beg a drink of water, yet he has been there ever since. There is nothing he is not ready to buy them. I myself saw him buying a horse and cart to-day at the innkeeper's. There cannot be many such people in the world. I should like to see this marvellous pilgrim.”

When Elijah heard this, and understood that it was himself they were praising, he forbore to go and buy the cow, but returned to the innkeeper and paid over the money for the horse and cart.

Then he harnessed the horse, and drove home to the hut. Driving right up to the gates, he stopped and alighted. His hosts were surprised to see the horse, and although it crossed their minds that possibly he might have bought it for themselves, they hesitated to say so. However, the husband remarked as he ran to open the gates : " So you have bought a new horse, then, grandfather ? " To this Elijah merely answered : " Yes, but I only bought it because it happened to be going cheap. Cut some fodder, will you, and lay it in the manger for its food to-night ? " So the peasant unharnessed the horse, cut some swathes of grass, and filled the manger. Then everyone lay down to rest. But Elijah lay out upon the roadway, whither he had taken his wallet beforehand ; and when all the people were asleep he arose, girded on his wallet, put on his boots and cloak, and went on his way to overtake Efim.

VII

WHEN Elijah had gone about five versts, the day began to break. He sat down under a tree, opened his wallet, and began to make calculations. According to his reckoning, he had seventeen roubles and twenty copecks left. " Well, " he thought, " I can't get across the sea on that, and to raise the rest in Christ's name would be a sin indeed.

Friend Efim must finish the journey alone, and offer my candle for me. Yes, my vow must remain unfulfilled now until I die; but, thanks be to God, the Master is merciful and long-suffering."

So he rose, slung his wallet across his shoulders, and went back. Yet he made a circuit of the village—of *that* village—so that the people should not see him. Soon he was near home again. When he had been travelling *away* from home, walking had been an effort, and he had hardly been able to keep up with Efim; but now that he was travelling *towards* home it seemed as if God helped his steps and never let him know weariness. As he went along he jested, swung his staff about, and covered seventy versts a day.

So he came home. A crowd gathered from the fields, far and near, and his entire household ran to greet their old head. Then they began to ply him with questions—as to how, when, and where everything had happened, why he had left his comrade behind, why he had returned home without completing the journey, and so on. Elijah did not make a long story of it.

"God did not see fit to bring me to my goal," he said. "I lost some money on the road, and got separated from my companion. So I went no further. Pardon me, for Christ's sake,"—and he handed what was left of the money to his old

goodwife. Then he asked her about his domestic affairs. All was well with them, everything had been done, there had been no neglect of household management, and the family had lived in peace and amity.

Efim's people heard the same day that Elijah had returned, and went to him to ask about their own old man. Elijah merely told them the same story, "Your old man," he said, "was quite well when he parted from me. That was three days before the Feast of Saint Peter. I meant to catch him up later, but various matters intervened where I was. I lost my money, and had not enough to continue upon, so I came back."

Everyone was surprised that a man of such sense could have been so foolish as to set out and yet never reach his journey's end, but only waste his money. They were surprised—and then forgot all about it. Elijah did the same. He resumed his household work—helping his son to get fire-wood ready against the winter, giving the women a hand with the corn-grinding, roofing the stable, and seeing to his bees. Likewise he sold another ten hives, with their produce, to the neighbour. His old wife wanted to conceal how many of the hives had been swarmed from, but Elijah knew without her telling him which of them had swarmed and which were barren, and handed

over seventeen hives to the neighbour instead of ten. Then he put everything straight, sent off his son to look for work for himself, and sat down for the winter to plait bast shoes and carve wooden clogs.

VIII

ALL that day when Elijah found the sick people in the hut and remained with them, Efim had waited for his companion. First he went on a little way and sat down. There he waited and waited, dozed off, woke up again, and went on sitting—but no Elijah appeared. He looked and looked about for him, while the sun sank behind a tree—yet still no Elijah. “Can he have passed me,” thought Efim, “or have been given a lift and so have *driven* past me, without noticing me where I sat asleep? Yet he could not have helped seeing me if that had been the case. In this steppe country one can see a long way. It would be no good my going back for him, since he might miss me on the road, and we should be worse off than ever. No, I will go on, and we shall probably meet at the next halting-place for the night.” In time Efim came to a village, and asked the *Desiatnik* there to see to it that if such and such an old

Desiatnik. Headman of a hamlet of ten families (or thereabouts).

man (and he described Elijah) arrived later he should be directed to the same hut as himself. But Elijah never arrived to spend the night, so Efim went on again the next morning, asking everyone whom he saw if they had come across a bald-headed old man. No one had done so, however. Efim was surprised, but still pushed on alone. "We shall meet somewhere in Odessa," he thought, "or on board the ship," and forthwith dismissed the matter from his mind.

On the road he fell in with a travelling monk who, dressed in skullcap and cassock, had been to Athos, and was now on his way to Jerusalem for the second time. They happened to lodge at the same place one night, and agreed henceforth to go together.

They arrived at Odessa without mishap, but were forced to wait three days for a ship. There were many other pilgrims waiting there, come from all parts of Russia, and among them Efim made further inquiries about Elijah, but no one had seen him.

The monk told Efim how he could get a free passage if he wished, but Efim would not hear of it. "I would much rather pay," he said. "I have made provision for that." So he paid down forty roubles for a passage out and home, as well as laid in a stock of bread and herrings to eat on

the way. In time the vessel was loaded and the pilgrims taken on board, Efim and the monk keeping close to one another. Then the anchor was weighed, sail set, and they put out to sea. All that first day they had smooth sailing, but towards evening the wind arose, the rain came down, and the vessel began to roll heavily and ship water.

The passengers were flung from side to side, the women began wailing, and those of the men whose stomachs were weaker than those of their fellows went below in search of berths. Efim too felt qualms, but repressed any outward manifestation of them, and remained sitting the whole of that night and the following day in the same position on deck which he had secured on embarking, and which he shared with some old people from Tamboff. They held on to their baggage, and squatted there in silence.

On the third day it grew calmer, and on the fifth they put into Constantinople, where some of the pilgrims landed and went to look at the Cathedral of Saint Sophia, now a Mohammedan mosque. Efim did not land, but remained sitting where he was. After a stay of twenty-four hours they put to sea again, and, calling only at Smyrna and Alexandria, arrived without mishap at their port of destination, Jaffah. There all the pilgrims

disembarked for the seventy versts' tramp to Jerusalem, the business of landing being a nerve-shaking one for the poor people, since they had to be lowered into small boats, and, the ship's side being high and the boats rocking violently, it always looked as though the passenger would overshoot the boat. As a matter of fact, two men did get a ducking, but eventually everyone came safely to land.

Once there, they lost no time in pushing forward, and on the fourth day arrived at Jerusalem. They passed through the city to a Russian hostel, showed their passports, had some food, and were conducted by the monk around the Holy Places. To the actual Holy Sepulchre itself there was no admission that day, but they first of all attended Matins at the Greek Monastery of the Patriarch (where they said their prayers and offered votive candles) and then went to gaze at the outside of the Church of the Resurrection, in which lies the actual Sepulchre of the Lord, but which is so built as to conceal all view of the Sepulchre from outside. That first day also they were afforded a glimpse of the cell where Mary of Egypt took refuge, and duly offered candles there and recited a thanksgiving. They next wished to return to Mass at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, but found that they were too late, and so went on to

the Monastery of Abraham in the Garden of Saveki, where Abraham once wished to sacrifice his son to the Lord.

Thence they proceeded to the place where Christ appeared to Mary Magdalene, and thence to the Church of Saint James, the brother of Our Lord. At all these places the monk acted as their guide, telling them everywhere how much to pay and where to offer candles. At length they returned to the hostel, and had just retired to rest when the monk suddenly sprang up, and began rummaging among his clothes. "Someone has stolen my purse and money!" he exclaimed. "The purse had twenty-three roubles in it—two ten-rouble notes and three roubles in coin!" He raged and stormed for some time, but there was no help for it, and eventually they all lay down to sleep.

IX

EFIM lay down with the rest, and a temptation fell upon him. "I do not believe," he thought to himself, "that the monk was robbed, for he had nothing which thieves could take. He never gave anything anywhere. He told *me* to give, but never gave anything himself, and even borrowed a rouble of *me*."

But almost instantly he began to reproach himself for thinking so. "Who am I," he said, "to judge another? It is sinful of me, and I will refrain from these thoughts." It was not long, however, before he found himself remembering again how watchful of money the monk had been, and how unlikely it was that his tale of being robbed could be true. "He had nothing to be robbed of," thought Efim once more. "It was a mere excuse."

In the morning they rose and went to early mass at the great Church of the Resurrection—at the Holy Sepulchre itself. The monk never left Efim, but walked by his side all the way. When they entered the church they found a great crowd there, both of monks and pilgrims—Russian, Greek, Armenian, Turkish and Syrian, as well as of obscurer nationalities. Efim approached the Holy Gates with the others, passed the Turkish guards, and reached the spot where the Saviour was taken down from the Cross, and where now stood nine candlesticks with lighted tapers. There he offered a candle, and was then conducted by the monk up the steps on the right to Golgotha, to the spot where the Cross had stood. There Efim knelt down and prayed. Then he was shown the cleft where the earth was rent, the spot where Christ's hands and feet were nailed to

the Cross, and the Tomb of Adam, where Christ's blood had trickled down upon Adam's bones. Next they came to the stone on which Christ sat while the Crown of Thorns was being placed upon His head, and then to the pillar to which He was bound for the scourging. Finally Efim saw the stone with the two holes for the feet of Christ. They could have shown him something more had not the crowd hurried forward, for all were eager to reach the actual catacomb of the Lord's Sepulchre. There a foreign Mass had just ended, and the Orthodox was beginning. Efim entered the Sepulchre with the rest.

He wanted to get rid of the monk, for he found himself continually sinning in his thoughts against him ; but the monk still kept by his side, and entered with him into the Holy Sepulchre to hear Mass. They tried to get nearer to the front, but found it impossible, since the people were so closely packed that any movement either backward or forward was out of the question. As Efim stood gazing to the front and trying to pray, he found himself continually feeling for his purse. Two thoughts kept passing through his mind. The first was—" Is the monk cheating me all the time ? " and the second was—" If he has not been cheating me, and really had his purse stolen, why did they not do the same to me as well ? "

X

As Efim stood thus, praying and gazing towards the chapel in which the actual Sepulchre stood, with thirty-six lamps always burning above it—suddenly, as he stood peering through the heads in front of him, he saw a strange thing. Immediately beneath the lamps, and ahead of all the congregation, he perceived an old man, dressed in a rough serge *kaftan*, and with a shining bald head like Elijah Bodroff's. "How exactly like Elijah he is!" thought Efim to himself. "Yet it cannot possibly be he, for it would have been impossible for him to get here before myself. The last ship before our own sailed a whole week before we did, so he could never have caught it. And he certainly was not on our own, for I looked at every pilgrim on board."

Just as these thoughts had passed through Efim's mind, the old man in front began to pray, with three bows as he did so: one forwards, to God, and one on either side of him, to the whole Orthodox world. And lo! as the old man turned his head to bow towards his right, Efim recognised him beyond all possibility of doubt. It *was* Elijah Bodroff! Yes, that *was* Elijah's curly black beard—those *were* his eyebrows, his eyes, his nose

—those *were* his features altogether! Yes, it *was* he, and nobody else—Elijah Bodroff!

Efim was overjoyed at having found his comrade, though also not a little surprised that Elijah could have arrived before him.

“He must have slipped past me somewhere, and then gone on ahead with someone who helped him on the way,” thought Efim. “However, I will catch him as we pass out, and get rid of this monk in the skull-cap. After that Elijah and I will keep together again. He might have got me to the front now if he had been with me.”

So he kept his eyes fixed upon Elijah, determined not to lose sight of him. At last the Mass came to an end, and the people began to move. Indeed, there was such a crush as everyone pressed forward to kiss the Cross that Efim got jambed into a corner. Once more the thought that his purse might be stolen from him made him nervous, so he squeezed it tightly in his hand and set himself to force his way clear of the throng. Succeeding at last, he ran hither and thither, seeking Elijah, but eventually had to leave the church without having come across him. Next he visited the various hostels, to make inquiries about him, but, although he traversed the whole city, he could not find him anywhere. That evening, too, the monk did not return. He had

departed without repaying the rouble, and Efim was left alone.

Next day Efim went to the Holy Sepulchre again, accompanied by one of the old men from Tamboff who had been with him on the ship. Once more he tried to get to the front, and once more he got thrust aside, so that he had to stand by a pillar to say his prayers. He peered through the heads in front of him again, and, behold ! ahead of all the congregation, and under the very lamps of the Lord's Sepulchre, stood Elijah as before ! He had his arms spread out like those of a priest at the altar, and his bald head was shining all over.

"Now," thought Efim, "I do not mean to lose him this time." So he started to worm his way forward, and eventually succeeded—but Elijah had vanished. He must have left the church.

The third day also Efim went to Mass, and once more looked for Elijah. And once more there stood Elijah, in the same position as before, and having the same appearance. His arms were spread out and he was gazing upwards, as though beholding something above him, while his bald head again shone brightly.

"Well," thought Efim, "come what may, I am not going to lose him this time. I will go straight

away and post myself at the entrance, where we cannot possibly miss each other."

So he did so, and stood waiting and waiting as the people passed out ; but Elijah did not come with them.

Efim remained six weeks in Jerusalem. He visited all the holy spots—Bethlehem, Bethany, the Jordan, and the rest—as well as had a new shirt stamped with a seal at the Holy Sepulchre (to be buried in one day), took away water from the Jordan in a phial, took away also earth and candles from the Holy Place, and spent all his money except just what was sufficient to bring him home again. Then he started to return, reached Jaffah, embarked, made the passage to Odessa, and set out upon his long overland tramp.

XI

EFIM travelled alone, and by the same route as on the outward journey. Gradually as he drew nearer home there came back to him his old anxiety to know how things had been faring in his absence. " So much water passes down a river in a year ! " he thought. " A home may take a lifetime to build up, and an hour to destroy." So he kept constantly wondering how his son had managed

affairs since his departure, what sort of a spring it had been, how the cattle had stood the winter, and whether the new hut was finished.

When in time he arrived where he had parted from Elijah he found it hard to recognise the people of the locality. Where last year they had been destitute, to-day they were living comfortably, for the crops had been good everywhere. The inhabitants had recovered themselves, and quite forgotten their former tribulations. So it came about that one evening Efim was drawing near to the identical village where Elijah had left him a year ago. He had almost reached it, when a little girl in a white frock came dancing out of a hut near by, calling out as she did so, "Grand-father ! Dear grandfather ! Come in and see us." Efim was for going on, but she would not let him, and, catching him by the skirt of his coat, pulled him laughingly towards the hut. Thereupon a woman and a little boy came out upon the steps, and the former beckoned to Efim, saying : "Yes, pray come in, grandfather, and sup and spend the night." So Efim approached the hut, thinking to himself, "I might get news of Elijah here, for surely this is the very hut to which he turned aside to get a drink." He went in, and the woman relieved him of his wallet, gave him water to wash in, and made him sit down at the table ; after

which she produced milk, and dumplings, and porridge, and set them before him.

Efim thanked her kindly, and commended her readiness to welcome a pilgrim. The woman shook her head in deprecation of this. "We could do no otherwise," she answered, "for it was from a pilgrim that we learnt the true way of life. We had been living in forgetfulness of God, and He so punished us that we came very near to death's door. It was last year, in the summer, and things had gone so hard with us that we were, one and all, lying ill and starving. Of a surety we should have died, had not God sent to us just such another old man as yourself. He came in at midday, to beg a drink of water, and was seized with compassion when he saw us, and remained here. He gave us food and drink and set us on our feet, redeemed our land for us, bought us a horse and cart—and then disappeared."

The old woman entered the hut at this moment, and the younger one broke off.

"Yes," went on the old woman, "to this day we do not know whether that man may not have been an angel of God. He loved us, pitied us, and yet went away without saying who he was, so that we know not for whom to pray. Even now it all passes before my eyes. I was lying there, waiting for death, when I chanced to look up and

saw that an old man—an ordinary-looking old man, except for his baldness—had entered to beg some water. I (may God forgive me for my sinfulness !) thought to myself : ‘ Who is this vagabond ? ’ Yet listen now to what he did. No sooner had he seen us than he took off his wallet, and, laying it down here—yes, here, on this very spot—unfastened it and——”

“ No, no, granny,” broke in the little girl, eagerly. “ First of all he laid the wallet in the *middle* of the hut, and *then* set it on the bench ”—and they fell to vieing with one another in recalling Elijah’s every word and deed—where he had sat, where he had slept, and all that he had said and done to everybody.

At nightfall the master of the house came riding up to the hut on horseback, and soon took up the tale of Elijah’s life with them. “ Had he not come to us then,” he said, “ we should all of us have died in sin ; for, as we lay there dying and despairing, we were murmuring both against God and man. But this holy pilgrim set us on our feet once more, and taught us to trust in God and to believe in the goodness of our fellow men. Christ be with him ! Before, we had lived only as beasts : ‘twas he that made us human.”

So these good people entertained Efim with food and drink, showed him to a bed, and them-

selves lay down to sleep. But Efim could not sleep, for the memory of Elijah—of Elijah as he had three times seen him at the head of the congregation in Jerusalem—would not leave him.

“Somewhere on the road he must have passed me,” he thought. “Yet, however that may be, and no matter whether my pilgrimage be accepted or not, God has accepted *him*.”

In the morning his hosts parted with Efim, loaded him with pasties for the journey, and went off to their work, while Efim pursued his way.

XII

JUST a year had passed when Efim arrived home—arrived home in the spring. The time was evening, and his son was not in the hut, but at a tavern. At length he came home in drink, and Efim questioned him. There was abundant evidence that his son had been living a dissolute life in his absence. He had wasted all the money committed to his care, and neglected everything. His father broke out into reproaches, to which the son replied with insolence.

“You went gaily off on your travels,” he said, “and took most of the money with you. Yet now you require it of *me*!” The old man lost his temper and struck him.

Next morning, as he was going to the *starosta* to give up his passport, he passed Elijah's yard. On the lodge-step stood Elijah's old wife, who greeted Efim warmly.

"How are you, my good sir?" she said. "So you have returned safe and well?"

Efim stopped. "Yes, I have returned, glory be to God," he replied. "But I lost sight of your good husband, although I hear that he is back now."

The old woman responded readily, for she loved chatting.

"Yes, he is back, good sir," she said. "He returned some while ago—it was just after the Feast of the Assumption—and glad we were that God had brought him safely! We had been sadly dull without him. He can work but little now, for his best years lie behind him, but he remains always our head, and we are happier when he is here. How delighted our boy was! 'Life without daddy,' said he, 'is like having no light to see by.' Yes, we found it dull indeed without Elijah. We love him too well not to have missed him sorely."

"Then perhaps he is at home at this moment?"

"Yes, he is at home, and busy at his hive-bench, taking a swarm. He says that the swarms

Feast of the Assumption. Kept on 15th August to commemorate the Virgin Mary's ascent into heaven.

have been magnificent this year—that God has given the bees such health and vigour as he has never known before. Truly, he says, God does not reward us after our sins. But come in, my dear sir. He will be delighted to see you."

So Efim stepped through the lodge, crossed the courtyard, and went to find Elijah in the bee-garden. As he entered it he caught sight of him—unprotected by netting or gloves, and clad only in a grey *khaftan*—standing under a young birch tree. His arms were spread out and his face turned upwards, with the crown of his bald head shining all over, as when he had stood those three times by the Lord's Sepulchre in Jerusalem; while above him—as also in Jerusalem—the sun was playing through the birch branches like a great burning lamp, and around his head the golden bees were dancing in and out and weaving themselves into a diadem, without stinging him. Efim stood still where he was.

Then Elijah's wife called out: "Husband! A friend has come to see you." Elijah looked round, his face broke out into smiles, and he ran to meet his comrade, gently brushing some bees from his beard as he did so.

"Good day to you, good day to you, my dear old friend!" he cried. "Then did you get there safely?"

"Yes, of a surety. My feet carried me safely, and I have brought you home some Jordan water. Come and see me some time and get it. Yet I know not if my task has been accepted of God, or——"

"Surely, surely it has. Glory be to Him and to Our Lord Jesus Christ!"

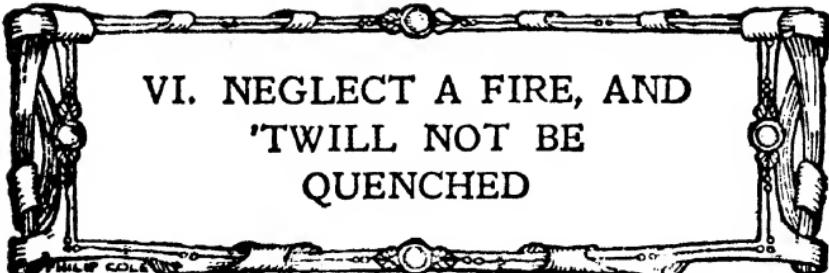
Efim was silent a moment; then continued: "Yes, my feet carried me thither; but whether I was there also in spirit, or whether it were another who——"

"Nay, nay. That is God's affair, my old comrade—God's affair."

"Well, on my way back," added Efim, "I stopped at the hut where you parted from me."

Elijah seemed frightened, and hastened to interrupt him. "That also is God's affair, my friend—God's affair," he said. "But come into the hut, and I will get you some honey"—and he hurried to change the conversation by talking of household matters.

Efim sighed, and forbore to tell Elijah of the people in the hut or of his having seen him in Jerusalem. But this clearly did he understand: that in this world God has commanded everyone, until death, to work off his debt of duty by means of love and good works.



VI. NEGLECT A FIRE, AND 'TWILL NOT BE QUENCHED

"Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?"

Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times, but, until seventy times seven.

Therefore is the Kingdom of Heaven likened unto a certain king which would take account of his servants.

And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him which owed him ten thousand talents.

But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

The servant therefore fell down and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow servants which owed him an hundred

pence ; and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.

And his fellow servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

And he would not, but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.

Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me :

Shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee ?

And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

So likewise shall My Heavenly Father do also unto you if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."

(MATT. xviii. 21-35.)

IN a certain village there lived a peasant named Ivan Shtchevbakoff. He lived comfortably enough, for he himself was strong and the best worker in the village, and, moreover, he had three sons of full age. One of these sons was married, another

one engaged to be married, and the third one a youngster old enough to look after the horses and to have begun to learn to plough. Likewise, Ivan's wife was a sensible, managing woman, and his daughter-in-law had proved herself a peaceable, hard-working girl. So he and his family did very well. The only mouth in the homestead that did not feed itself was that of the old father, who suffered from asthma, and had now been lying seven years by the stove. Ivan possessed plenty of stock—three mares and their foals, a cow with a weaning calf, and fifteen sheep—and, while the women of the family made boots for the household, sewed the men's clothing, and helped in the fields, the men of the family did the rough work of a peasant's life. If the stock of grain gave out before the next harvest was due, the sale of a few sheep soon put the family's requirements to rights; so that, what with one thing and what with another, the household did well.

Unfortunately, however, there lived next door to them a certain Gabriel Chromoi, the son of Gordei Ivanoff, and between him and Ivan there arose a feud.

So long as old Gordei—this Gordei's father—had been alive, and Ivan's father still ruled the

Chromoi. The Lame.

roost at Ivan's place, the two households had lived on neighbourly terms. If the women had need of a sieve or a bucket, or the men of an axle-tree or a wheel, the one household would send and borrow them of the other, and help each other as neighbours should do. Again, if a calf strayed from its rightful premises into the other family's threshing-floor, it would merely be driven out again with the request, "Please do not let your calf stray here, for we have not yet stacked our rick." But as for filching anything from one another, or for shutting up anything belonging to the other in barn or stable, such things were unknown in either establishment.

That is how things were in the time of the old men ; but when their sons came to be master things were otherwise.

It all arose from a trifle.

A young pullet belonging to Ivan's daughter-in-law began to lay early. In fact, the young woman was collecting eggs even before Holy Week, and went every day to the shed, where she would find an egg laid in the wagon. But one day, it appeared, the children frightened the pullet, so that she flew over the fence into the neighbours' yard, and laid there. The young woman heard the cackling, but thought to herself, " I have no time to get the egg now, for I have so much to get ready

for the festival. I will go at supper-time and fetch it."

So in the evening she went to the wagon under the shed—but there was no egg there. She asked her mother- and brothers-in-law if they had taken it, but they said no. Tarass, the youngest one, added, "The pullet must have laid in the neighbours' yard, for I heard her cackling there, and saw her fly back again."

So the young woman went to look for the pullet, and found her roosting on the beam with the cock. Her eyes were closing already, and she was preparing for her night's rest. The young woman would have asked her where she had laid if it had been possible for the pullet to answer, but, as it was, she went round to the neighbours', and was met at the door by the old woman.

"What do you want, my girl?" she asked.

"Only this, grandmother, that my pullet flew over into your place to-day, and we think she must have laid an egg there."

"We haven't seen it, then. We have our own eggs, and God sent that they were laid hours ago. All those that we collected were our own, and we have no need of other people's. We do not go collecting eggs in yards which don't belong to us, my girl."

The young woman was greatly offended at this,

and said the unnecessary word. Her neighbour capped this with two more, and in a moment they were at it hammer and tongs. Presently Ivan's wife came out with a bucket of water, and of course joined in the fray. Next, Gabriel's wife ran out of the door, and gave her neighbours the rough side of her tongue, regardless of what was fact and what was fiction. In short, there was a general uproar. Everyone shouted at the top of her voice, gabbling two words to the other's one, and every word a term of abuse. "You are this!" could be heard, or "You are that!" "You are a thief and a slut!" "May you and your father-in-law die of the plague together!" and "You are a cadger of other people's things!" were some of the other expressions used.

"You everlasting borrower, you have worn my sieve simply to shreds!" would cry one of the women.

"Well, you have got our yoke in your place at this moment," would retort the other. "Give us back our yoke at once."

So, wrangling about the yoke, they managed to upset the water, tore each other's clothes, and came in good earnest to blows. At this moment Gabriel arrived from the field, and took his wife's part, whereupon Ivan and one of his sons issued from the other hut, and likewise swelled the

tumult. Ivan was a muscular peasant, and thrust everyone aside. Eventually other peasants came running in to part the combatants, but not before Ivan had torn out a handful of Gabriel's beard.

That was how it all began. Gabriel wrapped his tuft of beard in newspaper, and went off to institute proceedings in the district court.

"I did not grow that piece of beard," he said, "for any tow-headed Ivans to pull out."

As for his wife, she did not let her neighbours forget that Ivan would assuredly be convicted and sent to Siberia.

So the feud went on.

Yet from the very first day the old man by the stove preached to them reconciliation. Yet the young people would not listen to him.

"You are acting foolishly, my children," he said. "You are making a great matter out of a trifle. Bethink yourselves—the whole affair has arisen out of an egg—an egg that was run off with only by the little bairns ! One egg is no great loss. Yet, although you have spoken in enmity, there is yet time to smooth it away and to learn better things. So long as you remain at variance you remain in sin. It must always be so. Go, then, and ask pardon of one another, and let our houses have but one roof again. If you harbour malice,

it cannot but be the worse for you as time goes on."

But the young people would not listen to him, for they thought that he did not understand the matter, and that he spoke with the garrulity of an old man.

Ivan also would not cry quits with his neighbour.

"I did not tear his beard," he declared. "He tore it out himself. On the other hand, he *did* tear the skirts of my blouse, not to speak of my shirt. Just look at it!"

So Ivan instituted proceedings in *his* turn, and the matter came before both the local and the district courts. While the case was still pending, a linch-pin chanced to disappear from Gabriel's cart. For this his womenkind blamed one of Ivan's sons.

"We saw him pass the window last night," they declared, "and go in the direction of the cart. Besides, a neighbour has given us the word that he went to an inn last night and pawned a linch-pin with the innkeeper."

So another suit was instituted, and every day there would be quarrels and fighting between the two huts. Even the children got set by the ears, in imitation of their elders, while the women could never meet by the brook without falling-to with their rolling-pins and showering abuse—most evil abuse—upon one another.

In time these peasants went on from making accusations against one another to filching each other's property whenever they were short of anything. The women and children learnt to do likewise, and things went from bad to worse. Ivan and Gabriel brought constant suits against one another, both at parish assemblies and before the local and district courts, until everyone was sick to death of their quarrels. One day Gabriel would have Ivan fined or imprisoned, and the next day Ivan would do the same by Gabriel. The more they hurt one another, the more embittered they grew. We all know that when dogs fight, they fight the more furiously if struck, for the one struck thinks that it is the other one biting him, and hangs on the more determinedly. In the same way these two peasants would sue each other, and one of them be punished with fine or imprisonment—with the result that the enmity of the pair would be more deadly even than before. "Wait a little, and I will be even with you!" was their mutual attitude.

Things went on thus for six years. Yet the old man by the stove never altered his advice.

"What are you doing, my children?" he would say. "Have done with old scores, and let the matter drop. Cease to be bitter against these neighbours of ours, and all will go well with you.

On the other hand, the longer you cherish your bitterness the worse will things become."

Yet they would not listen to the old man.

In the seventh year of the feud matters were brought to a head by Ivan's daughter-in-law putting Gabriel to shame before the whole company at a wedding-feast by accusing him of horse-stealing. Gabriel was drunk at the time, and not master of himself, so that he struck the woman—struck her with such clumsy aim, moreover, that she was laid in bed for a week. Ivan was overjoyed at this, and at once set off to the public prosecutor with an indictment, thinking: "Now at last I shall get rid of that precious neighbour of mine. He is bound to get either prison or Siberia." Yet his plea did not wholly succeed, for the public prosecutor declined to receive the indictment on the ground that, as the woman had recovered and showed no marks of injury when examined, it was a matter for the local courts only. So Ivan went to the *mirovoi*, who passed the case on to the district court. Ivan fussed about the precincts of the court, regaled the clerk and the usher on half a gallon of sweet cider, and pressed for a sentence of flogging to be awarded. And eventually the sentence was read out.

"The court ordains," read the clerk, "that

Mirovoi. Local magistrate.

Gabriel Gordieff, peasant, do receive twenty strokes within the precincts of the district police-station."

When Ivan heard the sentence he glanced at Gabriel. "How does he like it now?" he thought.

As for Gabriel, he turned as white as a sheet when the sentence was declared. Then he turned and went out into the corridor. Ivan followed him, and was just moving towards his horse when he heard Gabriel saying something.

"Very well," were Gabriel's words. "He is going to have my back flogged for me, and it will burn sorely; yet I pray that he and his may burn more sorely still."

When Ivan caught these words he at once returned into court.

"Your worship," he said, "this man has just threatened me with arson. Pray take the evidence of witnesses before whom he did it."

So Gabriel was sent for.

"Is it true that you said this?" he was asked.

"I said nothing," replied Gabriel. "Flog me if you wish. It seems that I only am to suffer, though in the right, whereas *he* may do what he pleases."

And he was about to say more, when his lips and cheeks started quivering, and he turned his face to the wall. Even the magistrates were moved

as they looked at him. "Can he really have threatened evil against his neighbour," they thought, "or was he only cursing at himself?"

So the senior magistrate said :

"See here, my good fellows. Would it not be better for you to be reconciled? For, look you, my good Gabriel, was it right what you did, to strike a woman? If you had right on your side, God has pardoned the deed, however sinful. But had you such right? No, assuredly you had not. Yet, if you will plead guilty and express your contrition to the prosecutor, I feel sure that he will pardon you, and we will then annul the sentence."

Hearing this the clerk intervened.

"That cannot be done," he said, "The 117th Article of the Penal Code forbids reconciliation of the parties when once sentence has been passed. Therefore the sentence must be carried out."

But the magistrate paid no attention to him.

"Enough!" he said. "Hold your tongue! The article which chiefly concerns us is this: In all things remember God. And God has commanded us to be reconciled, the one with the other."

So he tried again to persuade the two peasants to see reason, but without success, for Gabriel would not listen to him.

"I am a man wanting but a year of fifty," he

said, " and have a married son. Never since my boyhood have I been beaten. Yet now, when this scoundrel Ivan has brought me under the lash, I am to cry pardon to him ! Nay, let things be. But he shall have cause to remember me."

Again his voice broke, and he could say no more, but turned and left the court-room.

From the district town to Ivan's home was a distance of ten versts, so that it was quite late when Ivan reached there, and the women had gone to bring the sheep home. He unsaddled his horse and stabled it, and then entered the hut. There was no one within, since his sons were not yet back from the fields, and the women had gone to fetch the sheep. Seating himself upon a bench, he plunged into thought. He recalled the passing of the sentence upon Gabriel, and how Gabriel had blanched as he heard it and turned his face to the wall. Ivan's heart suddenly contracted. He pictured to himself what it might have been like if he himself had been sentenced to be flogged, and he felt sorry for Gabriel. At that moment he heard the old man on the stove begin coughing, and then turn himself over, put his feet to the floor, and stand up. Having risen, the old man dragged himself to the bench, and sat down beside Ivan. The effort of getting so far had exhausted him, and for a moment or

two he could only cough. At length, when his coughing fit was passed, he leaned forward over the table and said :

“ Well ! Did the court try the case ? ”

“ Yes,” answered Ivan, “ and sentenced Gabriel to twenty strokes.”

The old man shook his head.

“ That is bad, Ivan,” he said, “ as also is *all* this that you are doing. You are harming yourself even more than him. Even when he has been flogged, how will you be better off ? ”

“ This much—that he will refrain from doing such things again.”

“ But what things ? What worse things has he done than you ? ”

“ Nay, but what has he *not* done ? ” cried Ivan.

“ He nearly killed my daughter-in-law, and now threatens to fire my farm ! Why should I knuckle under to him ? ”

The old man sighed, and said :

“ You, Ivan, can walk and ride about the world, while I have to lie the year round on the stove ; so that perhaps you think that you see everything and I nothing. But no, my son, it is not so. There is very little that you see, for hatred has blinded your eyes. Others’ sins you see, but not your own, for *them* you place behind your back. You said just now that Gabriel has done you much

evil. Yet, if he had been the only one who had done evil, there would have been no quarrel between you. Can a dispute between two men arise from one side only? No, it takes two to make a quarrel. *His* wrong-doing you see, but not your own. If all the wrong had been on his side, and all the right on yours, bad blood could never have been made. Who was it tore his beard? Who was it overturned his rick when stacked? Who was it first haled the other before the courts, and is haling him still? Nay, but your own way of life is wrong, and that is whence the ill comes. I never lived so, my son, and never taught you to do so. How did I live with the old man, his father? Why, on neighbourly terms, as neighbours should do. If they ran short of meal, his wife would come to me and say: 'Good Uncle Frol, our meal has given out.' 'Go, then, young woman,' I would say, 'to the binn and take as much as you require.' Again, if they were lacking a hand to lead the horses at ploughing, I would say to you: 'Go, little Ivan, and help them with the horses.' Then, in my turn, if I were short of anything, I would go to his father and say: 'Uncle Gordei, I am put to it for such and such an article.' 'Take it, then, good Uncle Frol,' he would reply; and thus it always was with us, and life went smoothly. But how does it go now?

Only to-day a soldier was speaking to me of Plevna ; yet you and Gabriel are waging a more grievous battle than ever there was fought at Plevna. Is this the proper way to live, then ? No, it is not—it is sinful. You are a peasant and the master of a home. I would ask you, then—what sort of a lesson are you teaching to your women-kind and children ? Why, you are but teaching them to fight as dogs fight. To-day I saw that little rascal Tarass make a face at his Aunt Arina before his mother, and yet his mother only laughed at him. Is *that* right, I ask you ? Are such things as *that* to be ? Are you to say a word to me, and I two in return to you, and you then to strike me, and I to strike you twice for your one blow ? No, no, my dear son. That was not how Christ taught us poor fools when He walked this earth of ours. He taught us that to abuse we should return no answer, and his own conscience would convict the offender. Yes, that is what Our Little Father taught us. And if a man should smite us on the one cheek, we should turn to him the other also, and even submit ourselves to death at his hands if need be. His own conscience would convict him some day, and he would become reconciled and beg for pardon.

Plevna. A town in Bulgaria near which the Russians and Roumanians defeated the Turks in 1877.

Yes, that is what Christ taught us, and not pride. But why are you thus silent ? Is it not as I say ? ”

But Ivan returned no answer as he listened.

The old man coughed, cleared his throat with difficulty, and went on :

“ Maybe you think that Christ taught us amiss ? Yet his teaching was meant for us all, and for our good. Consider now your worldly substance ; has it increased or decreased since this Plevna was begun between you two ? Cast up how much you have spent on law-costs, on journeying to court and expenses. Here are you, with three sons strong as eagles, and with plenty to live upon ; yet, for all that, you must go seeking misfortune and wasting your means ! And why ? Simply through pride. You ought to be out in the fields with your sons—ploughing and sowing ; yet you spend your time for ever haling your enemy to court over some trifle or another. The ploughing is delayed, and the seeding, and so our Mother Earth does not bear. Why are the oats not sprouting yet ? When were they sown ? You had to go to town, forsooth. Yet what have you gained by your law-suiting ? Only a load round your own neck. Ah, my son, remember what is your proper work in life. Turn again to your ploughing and your sons and your home, and if any man offends you, pardon him as God has bidden us do. Then

will everything go better with you, and there will always be peace in your soul."

Still Ivan said nothing.

"But see here, now, dear Ivan," went on his father. "Listen to me who am an old man. Saddle the roan horse, and go back to the police-station and cancel your suit. Then, in the morning, go to Gabriel and ask pardon of him in God's name, and invite him to your home for the festival. To-morrow, the birthday of Our Lady, set out the *samovar*, take a half-bottle, and renounce this sinfulness for ever. Ay, and bid the women and children do the same."

Ivan sighed as he thought to himself: "Assuredly the old man is right, only I know not how to do this—how I am to become reconciled."

The old man seemed to have guessed his thoughts, for he said:

"Nay, but do not delay, dear Ivan. A fire should be quenched at the start, else, if it burn up, it may never be mastered."

He was going on to say more, when the women entered, chattering like magpies. Already they had heard the whole story of Gabriel being sentenced to a flogging and of his making threats of arson. Yes, they knew all about it, and had hastened to put their oar in by getting up a

Samovar. A kind of tea kettle.

quarrel with Gabriel's womenfolk at the pasture-ground. Now they burst out with the news that Gabriel's daughter-in-law had threatened them with the public prosecutor, whom she declared to be intervening on Gabriel's behalf. The public prosecutor (so said the women) was reviewing the whole case, and the schoolmaster had written out a petition to the Tsar in person, and in this petition every suit was set forth from the beginning—the one about the lynch-pin, and the one about the garden-ground, and so on—and half Ivan's land would be given to Gabriel as compensation.

When Ivan heard all this his heart grew hard again, and he thought better of being reconciled to his adversary.

A farmer always has much to do on his farm, so, instead of discussing matters with the women, Ivan rose and left the hut. By the time he had cleared up things in the barn and stable the sun had set and his sons were returning from the fields, where they had been ploughing a double tilth during the winter in readiness for the spring corn. Ivan met them and asked them about their work, after which he helped them to take the harness off the horses, laid aside a broken horse-collar for repairs, and was for stowing away some poles in

Ploughing a double tilth. Going over the land twice.

the stable, but it was getting too dark to see. So he left the poles till the morning, and, after feeding the stock, opened the gates for young Tarass to take the horses across the roadway to their night pasture. Finally, he closed the gates, put up the board which fastened them, picked up the broken horse-collar and walked towards the hut, thinking : " It is time now for supper and bed." At the moment he had forgotten all about Gabriel, as well as about his father's words ; yet he had no sooner laid his hand upon the door-knob to enter the porch, than he heard his neighbour shout in a hoarse voice to someone on the other side of the fence : " To the devil with him ! I could kill him ! "

These words aroused in Ivan all his old enmity against his neighbour, and he waited to hear what more he might say. But nothing further came from Gabriel, so Ivan went indoors. The lamp had just been lit, the young woman was sitting at her loom in the corner, the goodwife was preparing supper, the eldest son was putting a patch into his bast shoes, the second son was reading a book at the table, and little Tarass was getting himself ready to go and sleep in the horse-stable over the way. Everything would have looked cosy and cheerful had it not been for that one blighting influence—their wicked neighbour.

Ivan came in tired, turned the cat off the bench, and rated the women for having put the stove-couch out of its place. He sat down with knitted brows to mend the horse-collar, but felt restless somehow. Gabriel's words would keep running through his head—both the threats he had uttered in the court-house, and the words he had just shouted in a hoarse voice to someone behind the fence : “ I could kill him ! ”

Meanwhile the goodwife was bustling about to give young Tarass his supper. As soon as he had eaten it, he put on his little sheepskin and *kaftan*, belted them round, took a hunch of bread, and went out to drive the mares down the street. His eldest brother was for going with him, but Ivan himself rose and accompanied him out on to the steps. It was quite dark now in the yard, for the sky was overcast and a wind was rising. Ivan descended from the steps to mount his little son, and, having shoo'ed the foals after him, stood watching them depart. He could hear Tarass go riding along the street, until joined by other boys, and then the sound of them died away. Yet he still hung about the gates, for Gabriel's words would not leave his mind : “ I pray that he and his may burn more sorely still.”

“ He would not hesitate to do it,” thought Ivan. “ Everything is standing dry now, and there

is a wind blowing, so that if he were to get in somewhere at the back, and fire things from there, it would make a terrible blaze. The wind would fan it too fiercely for it ever to stop. Yes, once it were alight there would be no putting it out."

The idea took such a hold upon Ivan that, instead of returning to the steps, he went out into the roadway, and then round behind the gates.

" Suppose I make a complete inspection of the place ? " he thought. " Who knows what that man may not be up to ? " So he left the gates, and went along with stealthy tread until he came to the corner. There, as he glanced along the wall, he thought he could discern something moving—something which jutted out at one moment, and became hidden in a recess the next. He stopped and remained absolutely still as he listened and watched. Yet all was quiet. Only the wind kept shaking the leaves of a vine-stock and moaning through its stems. It was very dark, yet not so completely so but that, by straining his eyes, Ivan could distinguish the outlines of things —of the back wall, a plough, and the eaves overhead. He listened and watched, but there seemed to be no one there.

" I cannot help thinking that I saw a glimmer just now," he said to himself. " Suppose I were

to go right round the place ? ” So he crept stealthily along under the stable, walking so softly in his bast shoes that he could not even hear his own footsteps. He had almost reached the recess when lo ! something flashed for a moment beside the plough, and then disappeared. Ivan’s heart gave a thump, and he stopped dead. Yet even as he did so there came a brighter glimmer at that spot—a glimmer which revealed a man in a cap—a man kneeling back upon his heels and engaged in lighting a tuft of straw which he held in his hands. Ivan’s heart beat in his breast like a bird fluttering, as, stiffening himself all over, he darted forward with long strides, but too softly for him even to hear his own footsteps. “ He shall not escape me ! ” he thought. “ I will catch him in the very act ! ”

He had not advanced another couple of strides when suddenly a brilliant light flared up—but not from the spot low down in the recess, for the wattling of the wall flamed up in the eaves, and thence the fire was carried on to the roof. In the light of the flames Gabriel stood revealed as clear as day.

Ivan made for the lame man as a hawk stoops to a lark. “ I will wring his neck now,” he thought, “ for he cannot escape me.” Yet the lame man must suddenly have heard his footsteps, for he

glanced round, and then, with a sudden turn of speed, limped away like a hare.

“ You shall not escape me ! ” shouted Ivan as he flew in pursuit. Just as he was on the point of seizing him by the collar, the hunted man doubled, and Ivan’s hands clutched the tail of his coat only. The tail tore away, and Ivan fell forwards. Instantly leaping up again, he shouted, “ Watchman ! Hold him ! ” and resumed the chase.

Yet, while he had been scrambling to his feet, Gabriel had regained his own yard. Ivan pursued him there, and was once more on the point of seizing him, when something crashed down upon his head, like a rock falling from above. Gabriel had picked up an oaken stake lying in the yard, swung it aloft to the full extent of his arm, and brought it down upon Ivan’s head just as the latter ran in upon him.

Ivan blinked his eyes, and sparks flashed before them. Then all grew dark as he staggered and fell to the ground. When he came to himself again Gabriel had disappeared, and it was as light as day, while from the direction of his own yard there came a crackling, rattling sort of a sound, like a machine at work. Ivan turned his head and saw that the whole of the back shed was ablaze, and that the side shed too had caught, while flames and smoke and bits of burning straw in

the smoke were being carried in a stream on to the hut.

"Help, neighbours!" cried Ivan, raising his hands in despair and smacking them down upon his thighs. "Pull the burning stuff from the eaves for me, and stamp it out! Help, good neighbours!"

He tried to keep on shouting, but his breath failed him and his voice choked. Then he tried to start running, but his legs refused to move, and kept catching against one another. Whenever he took a step forward he staggered, and his breath failed, so that he had to stand still and recover it before he could move again. At last, however, he managed to get round the shed and approach the fire. The side shed was a mass of flames, as also were one corner of the hut and the porch. Indeed, the flames were bursting so furiously from the hut that the yard was impassable. A large crowd had collected, but had done nothing. Only the neighbours had succeeded in removing their stock and furniture from their own premises.

Gabriel's place was the next one after Ivan's to be consumed, and then, the wind carrying the flames across the roadway, half the village became involved. The old man had been got out of Ivan's hut only just in time, while the others had had to

rush forth exactly as they were, and abandon everything. The whole of the stock except the horses at night pasture had been consumed, as well as the poultry on the roosting beams, the carts, the ploughs, the harrows, the women's chests, and the grain in the binns. On the other hand, Gabriel's stock was saved, and a certain amount of his other belongings.

The fire lasted for a long time—all night, in fact—and for a while Ivan stood watching his place being consumed, and reiterating at intervals : "Help, good neighbours ! Pull out the burning stuff and stamp upon it !" But when at length the roof of the hut fell in, he rushed into the very heart of the fire, and, seizing hold of a blazing beam, tried to drag it out. The women had seen him and called to him to come back, but he nevertheless dragged out the beam, and was about to drag out another, when he suddenly staggered and fell into the flames. His son went in after him, and got him out, but, although his hair and beard had been singed, his clothes half burnt away, and his hands injured, he had felt nothing. "He has gone mad with grief," said the peasants. In time the fire began to die down, yet Ivan still stood there, repeating : "Help, neighbours ! Pull out the burning stuff ! "

Next morning the *starosta* sent his son to him.

"Uncle Ivan," said the son, "your father is dying, and bade me fetch you to take leave of him."

Ivan had forgotten all about his father, and could not understand who was referred to.

"Whose father?" he asked. "And who is it he wants?"

"Yourself. He bade me fetch you to take leave of him. He is dying in our hut. Come, Uncle Ivan"—and the *starosta's* son held out his hand to him. Ivan went with him.

Some blazing straw had fallen upon the old man as he was being carried out of the hut the previous night, and burnt him badly. They had then removed him to the *starosta's* hut, which stood in the far outskirts of the village, and had escaped the fire.

When Ivan reached his father there was no one in the hut but an old woman, and some children lying on the stove; for everyone else was busy at the ruins of the fire. The old man was lying in a bunk, with a candle in his hands, and his face turned towards the door. As soon as his son entered the outer door he stirred a little, and when the old woman went to tell him that his son had come, he bade him draw nearer. Ivan did so, and the old man said:

"What did I tell you, dear Ivan? Who was it fired the village?"

“ *He*, dear father. *He*, for I found him at it. With my own eyes I saw him put the kindling into the eaves. Ah, if only I had stopped to pull out the burning straw and stamp upon it ! But I had no time.”

“ Ivan,” went on the old man, “ my end is near, and I would have you reconciled. Whose was the fault ? ”

Ivan gazed fixedly at his father, but remained silent. Not a word could he utter.

“ Before God, speak,” said his father again. “ Whose was the fault ? What did I say to you but lately ? ”

Then at length Ivan came to himself and understood all. He gave a sob and replied :

“ Mine was the fault, dear father.”

Then, bursting into tears, he fell upon his knees and exclaimed :

“ Pardon me, O my father ! I have sinned both against you and against God ! ”

The old man moved his hands and changed the candle into the left. Then he raised his right hand towards his forehead as though to cross himself, but could not stretch it so far, and desisted.

“ Glory be to Thee, O Lord ! Glory be to Thee ! ” he murmured as he turned his eyes again upon his son. “ But, Ivan, dear Ivan—”

" What is it, my father ? "

" What shall you do now ? "

Ivan burst out weeping afresh.

" I know not, dear father," he said. " How, indeed, are we to live, now that this has happened ? "

The old man closed his eyes, moistened his lips a little, as though he were collecting all his strength, and then said, as he re-opened his eyes :

" Live on and prosper. So long as your life be with God, you will prosper."

He was silent for moment, then smiled gently and continued :

" Look you, dear Ivan—*never* say who started the fire. If you should shield the sins of another God will pardon you two of your own"—and, taking the candle in his two hands, the old man folded them upon his breast, sighed, stretched himself out, and passed away.

Ivan never told of Gabriel, and so no one ever knew whence the fire originated.

Indeed, Ivan's heart went out to Gabriel, while Gabriel, for his part, was amazed that Ivan had never informed against him. At first he went in fear of him, but gradually grew accustomed to the new order of things ; with the result that the two peasants abandoned their feud, and their families did the same. While their new home-

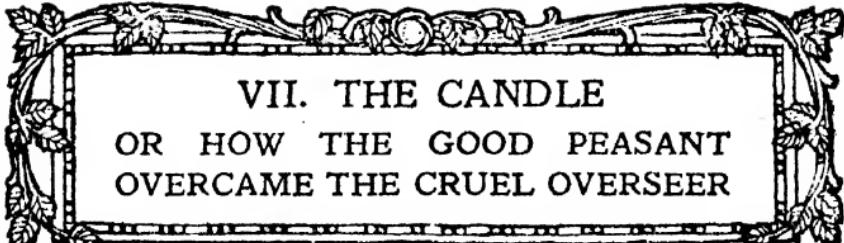
steads were being built, the two families lived as one, under the same roof ; and when the whole village had been rebuilt, with its huts put wider apart, Ivan and Gabriel still remained neighbours, with contiguous homesteads.

Indeed, they lived as good neighbours as their fathers had done. Never did Ivan Shtchevbakoff forget the advice of the old man and the law of God—that a fire should be quenched when it is but a spark.

If any man did him wrong, he would strive, not to avenge himself, but to right the matter ; and if any man flung him an evil word, he would strive, not to return a word more evil, but to teach that man a better one. And in like manner also he taught his women-folk and sons to do.

Thus Ivan Shtchevbakoff put straight his way of life, and prospered as he had never done before.





VII. THE CANDLE OR HOW THE GOOD PEASANT OVERCAME THE CRUEL OVERSEER

“Ye have heard how it has been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth : but I say unto you, resist not evil.”

THIS happened in the time of the masters. Of masters there were different kinds. There were those who, remembering God and the hour of death, showed mercy to their serfs, and there were others—sheer brutes—who remembered neither. Of these over-lords, the worst were those who had themselves been serfs—men who had risen from the mire to consort with princes. Life under them was the hardest of all.

Such an overseer was appointed to a seigniorial estate, the peasantry on which worked on the *barstchina* system. The estate was a large and fine one, comprising as it did both meadow and forest land, as well as a good water supply. Both its owner and the peasantry were contented,

The masters. Before the emancipation of the serfs in 1861.

Barstchina. A system of forced labour—so many days per week—under which the peasants held their land.

until the former appointed one of his house-serfs from another estate to be overseer.

This overseer assumed office, and began to press the peasants hardly. He had a family—a wife and two married daughters—and meant to make money, by fair means or by foul, for he was both ambitious and thoroughly wicked. He began by compelling the peasants to exceed their tale of days under the *barstchina*, and, having started a brick factory, nearly worked the people (women as well as men) to death, that he might sell and make money by the bricks. Some of the peasants went to Moscow to complain to the owner of the estate, but their representations availed nothing. The owner sent his petitioners away empty-handed, and did nothing to check the overseer. Soon the overseer heard that the peasants had been to complain, and started to take vengeance upon them, so that their daily lot became worse than ever. Moreover, some of them were untruthful men, and began telling tales of one another to the overseer and intriguing among themselves, with the result that the whole district was set by the ears, and the overseer only grew the more cruel.

Things grew steadily worse, until at last the overseer was as much feared by the peasantry as

Tale of days. Number of days.

though he had been a raging wild beast. Whenever he rode through the village, every man shrank away from him as from a wolf, and endeavoured at all costs to avoid his eye. The overseer saw this, and raged all the more because they feared him so. He flogged and overworked the peasants, and many a one suffered sore ill at his hands.

In time, however, it came to pass that the peasants became desperate at these villainies, and began to talk among themselves. They would gather together in some secluded spot, and one of the more daring of them would say, "How much longer are we going to put up with this brute who is over us? Let us end it, once and for all. It would be no sin to kill such a man."

Once the peasants had been told off to clear the undergrowth in the forest. It was just before the beginning of Holy Week, and when they gathered together for the mid-day meal they began to talk once more.

"How can we go on like this?" they said. "That man is driving us to desperation. He has so overworked us of late that neither we nor our women have had a moment's rest by day or night. Besides, if anything is not done exactly to his liking, he flies into a passion and beats us. Simon died from his flogging, and Anisim has just under-

gone torture in the stocks. What are we to look for next? That brute will be coming here this evening, and we shall feel the rough side of his tongue. Well, all we need do is to pull him from his horse, bash him over the head with an axe, and thus end the whole thing. The only thing is—we must all be agreed, we must all stand together. There must be no treachery."

Vassili Minaeff was especially insistent in the matter, for he had a particular spite against the overseer. Not only did the latter flog him every week, but he had also carried off his wife to be his cook.

So the peasants talked among themselves, and in the evening the overseer arrived. He had hardly ridden up when he flew into a rage because the chopping had not been done to his liking. Moreover, in one of the piles of faggots he detected a hidden bough.

"I told you not to cut the lindens," he said. "Which of you has done this? Tell me, or I will flog the whole lot of you."

So, on his asking them again in whose tale of trees the linden had been included, the peasants pointed to Sidor; whereupon the overseer lashed him over the face till it was covered with blood, gave Vassili also a cut because his pile of faggots was too small, and rode off home again.

That evening the peasants collected together as usual, and Vassili said :

“ What fellows you are ! You are sparrows rather than men. You keep saying to one another, ‘ Stand ready, now, stand ready,’ and yet, when the moment comes, you are every one of you afraid. That is just how the sparrows got ready to resist the hawk. ‘ Stand ready, now, stand ready—no betrayal of one another,’ they said ; and yet, when the hawk stooped, they scurried off into the nettle-bed, and the hawk took the sparrow he wanted, and flew off with it dangling in his talons. Then the sparrows hopped out again. ‘ Tweet, tweet !’ they cried—and then saw that one of their number was missing. ‘ Which of us is gone ?’ they said. ‘ Oh, only little Vania. Well, it was fated thus, and he is paying for the rest of us.’ The same with you fellows, with your cry of ‘ No betrayal, no betrayal.’ When that man hit Sidor you should have plucked up heart of grace and finished him. But no ; it was, ‘ Stand ready, stand ready ! No betrayal, no betrayal !’—and yet, when the hawk stooped, every man of you was off into the bushes.”

The peasants talked more and more frequently on this subject, until they were quite prepared to make an end of the overseer.

Now, on the Eve of Passion Week he sent word

to them that they were to hold themselves in readiness to plough the *barstchina* land for oats. This seemed to the peasants a desecration of Passion Week, and they gathered together in Vassili's backyard and debated the matter.

"If he has forgotten God," they said, "and orders us to do such things as that, it is our bounden duty to kill him. Let us do it once for all."

Just then they were joined by Peter Michieff. Peter was a peaceable man, and had hitherto taken no part in these discussions. Now, however, he listened, and then said :

"You are meditating a great sin, my brothers. To take a man's life is a terrible thing to do. It is easy enough to destroy another's life, but what about your own? If this man does evil things, then evil awaits him. You need but be patient, my brothers."

Vassili flew into a passion at these words.

"For you," he said, "there is but one consideration—that it is a sin to kill a man. Yes, of course it is a sin, but not in such a case as the present one. It is a sin to kill a *good* man, but what about a dog like this? Why, God has commanded us to kill him. One kills a mad dog for the sake of one's fellows. To let this man live would be a greater sin than to kill him. Why

should he go on ruining our lives? No matter if we suffer for killing him, we shall have done it for our fellows, and they will thank us for it. Yours is empty talk, Michieff. Would it be a less sin, then, for us to go and work during Christ's holy festival? Why, you yourself do not intend to go, surely?"

"Why should I *not* go?" answered Peter. "If I am sent to plough I shall obey. It will not be for myself that I shall be doing it. God will know to whom to impute the sin, and, for ourselves, we need but bear Him in mind as we plough. These are not my own words, brothers. If God had intended that we should remove evil by evil, He would have given us a law to that effect and have pointed us to it as the way. No. If you remove evil by evil, it will come back to you again. It is folly to kill a man, for blood sticks to the soul. Take a man's soul, and you plunge your own in blood. Even though you may think that the man whom you have killed was evil, and that thus you have removed evil from the world—look you, you yourselves will have done a more wicked deed than any one of his. Submit yourselves rather to misfortune, and misfortune will submit itself to you."

After this, the peasants were divided in opinion, since some of them agreed with Vassili, and some

of them respected Peter's advice to be patient and refrain from sin.

On the first day of the festival (the Sunday) the peasants kept holiday, but in the evening the *starosta* arrived from the manor house with his messengers, and said :

“ Michael Semenovitch, the overseer, has sent us to warn you that you are to plough to-morrow in readiness for the oat sowing.”

So the *starosta* and his men went round the village and told all the peasants to go to plough next day—some of them beyond the river, and some of them starting from the highroad. The peasants were in great distress, yet dared not disobey, and duly went out in the morning with their teams, and started ploughing. The church bells were ringing to early mass, and all the world was observing the festival ; but the peasants—they were ploughing.

The overseer awoke late that morning and went to make his round of the homestead as usual. His household tidied themselves up and put on their best clothes, and, the cart having been got ready by a workman, drove off to church. On their return a serving-woman set out the *samovar*, the overseer returned from the farm, and everyone sat down to tea-drinking. That finished, Michael lighted his pipe and called for the *starosta*.

" You set the peasants to plough ? " he asked.

" Yes, Michael Semenovitch."

" They all of them went, did they ? "

" Yes, all of them, and I divided up the work myself."

" Well, you may have done that, but are they actually *ploughing* ? That is the question. Go and see whether they are, and tell them that I myself am coming when I have had dinner.. Tell them also that each two ploughs must cover a *desiatin*, and that the ploughing is to be good. If I find anything done wrong I shall act accordingly, festival or no festival."

" Very good, Michael Semenovitch," and the *starosta* was just departing when Michael called him back. He called him back because he wanted to say something more to him, though he hardly knew how to do it. He hemmed and ha'ed, and finally said :

" I want you to listen, too, to what those rascals are saying of me. If you hear anyone abusing me, come and tell me all he said. I know those brigands well. They don't like work—they only like lying on their backs and kicking up their heels. Guzzling and keeping holiday, that is what they love, and they will think nothing of leaving a bit of land unploughed, or of not finishing their allotted piece, if I let them. So just

you go and listen to what they are saying, and mark those who are saying it, and come and report all to me. Go and inspect things, report to me fully, and keep nothing back—those are your orders."

The *starosta* turned and went out, and, mounting his horse, galloped off to the peasants in the fields.

Now, the overseer's wife had heard what her husband had said to the *starosta*, and came to him to intercede for the peasants. She was a woman of gentle nature, and her heart was good. Whenever she got an opportunity she would try to soften her husband and to defend the peasants before him.

So she came now to her husband, and interceded.

"My dearest Michael," she implored, "do not commit this great sin against the Lord's high festival, but let the peasants go, for Christ's sake."

But Michael disregarded what she said, and laughed at her.

"Has the whip become such a stranger to your back," he said, "that you are grown so bold as to meddle with what is not your business?"

"Oh, but, Michael dearest, I have had such an evil dream about you. Do listen to me, and let the peasants go."

"All I have to say to you," he replied, "is that

you are evidently getting above yourself, and need a slash of the whip again. Take that!" And in his rage he thrust his glowing pipe-bowl against her lips, and, throwing her out of the room, bid her send him in his dinner.

Jelly, pies, *shtchi* with bacon, roast sucking-pig, and vermicelli pudding—he devoured them all, and washed them down with cherry-brandy. Then, after dessert, he called the cook to him, set her down to play the piano, and himself took a guitar and accompanied her.

Thus he was sitting in high spirits as he hiccuped, twanged the strings, and laughed with the cook, when the *starosta* returned, and, with a bow to his master, began to report what he had seen in the fields.

"Are they ploughing, each man his proper piece?" asked Michael.

"Yes," replied the *starosta*, "and they have done more than half already."

"No skimping of the work, eh?"

"No, I have seen none. They are ploughing well, for they are afraid to do otherwise."

"And is the up-turn good?"

"Yes, it is quite soft, and scatters like poppy-seed."

The overseer was silent a moment.

Shtchi. Cabbage soup.

"Well, and what do they say of me?" he went on presently. "Are they abusing me?"

The *starosta* hesitated, but Michael bid him tell the truth.

"Tell me everything," he said. "'Tis not your own words that you will be reporting, but theirs. Tell me the truth, and I will reward you; but screen those fellows, and I will show you no mercy—I will flog you soundly. Here, Katiushka! Give him a glass of *vodka* to encourage him."

The cook went and fetched a glassful, and handed it to the *starosta*, whereupon the latter made a reverence to his master, drank the liquor down, wiped his mouth, and went on speaking.

"Anyway," he thought to himself, "it is not my fault that they have nothing to say in praise of him, so I will tell the truth since he bids me do so."

So the *starosta* plucked up courage and went on:

"They are grumbling, Michael Semenovitch. They are grumbling terribly."

"But what exactly do they say? Tell me."

"There is one thing they *all* of them say—namely, that you have no belief in God."

The overseer burst out laughing.

"Which of them say that?" he asked.

"They all do. They say, in fact, that you serve the Devil."

The overseer laughed the more.

"That is excellent," he said. "Now tell me what each of them *separately* has to say of me. What, for instance, does our friend Vassili say?"

The *starosta* had been reluctant hitherto to inform against his own friends, but between him and Vassili there was an old-standing feud.

"Vassili," he replied, "curses you worse than all the rest."

"Then tell me what he says."

"I am ashamed to repeat it, but he hopes you may come to a miserable end some day."

"Oh, he does, does he, that young man?" exclaimed the overseer. "Well, he won't ever kill me, for he will never get a chance of laying his hands upon me. Very well, friend Vassili, you and I will have a settling together. And what does that cur Tishka say?"

"Well, no one says any good of you. They all curse you and utter threats."

"What about Peter Michieff? What did *he* say? I'll be bound the old rascal was another one of those who cursed me."

"No, but he was not, Michael Semenovitch."

"What *did* he say, then?"

"He was the only one of them who said nothing at all. He knows a great deal for a peasant, and I marvelled when I saw him to-day."

“ Why so ? ”

“ Because of what he was doing. The others marvelled at him too.”

“ What was he doing ? ”

“ A most strange thing. He was ploughing the grass *desiatin* by the Tourkin ridge, and as I rode up to him I seemed to hear someone singing in a low, beautiful voice, while in the middle of his plough-shaft there was something burning.”

“ Well ? ”

“ This thing was burning like a little tongue of fire. As I drew nearer I saw it was a five-copecck wax candle, and that it was fastened to the shaft. A wind was blowing, and yet the candle never went out.”

“ And what did he say ? ”

“ He said nothing, except that when he saw me he gave me the Easter greeting, and then began singing again. He had on a new shirt, and sang Easter hymns as he ploughed. He turned the plough at the end of the furrow, and shook it, yet the candle never went out. Yes, I was close to him when he shook the clods off the plough and lifted the handles round. Yet, all the time that he was guiding the plough round, the candle remained burning as before.”

“ What did you say to him ? ”

“ I said nothing, but some of the other peasants

came up and began laughing at him. 'Get along with you!' they said. 'Michieff will take a century to atone for ploughing in Holy Week.'"

"And what did he say to that?"

"Only 'On earth peace, and goodwill toward men'; after which he bent himself to his plough, touched up his horse, and went on singing to himself in a low voice. And all the time the candle kept burning steadily and never went out."

The overseer ceased to laugh, but laid aside the guitar, bowed his head upon his breast, and remained plunged in thought.

He dismissed the cook and the *starosta*, and still sat on and on. Then he went behind the curtain of the bed-chamber, lay down upon the bed, and fell to sighing and moaning as a cart may groan beneath its weight of sheaves. His wife went to him and pleaded with him again, but for a long time he returned her no answer.

At last, however, he said, "That man has got the better of me. It is all coming home to me now."

Still his wife pleaded with him.

"Go out," she implored him, "and release the peasants. Surely this is nothing. Think of the things you have done and were not afraid. Why, then, should you be afraid of this now?"

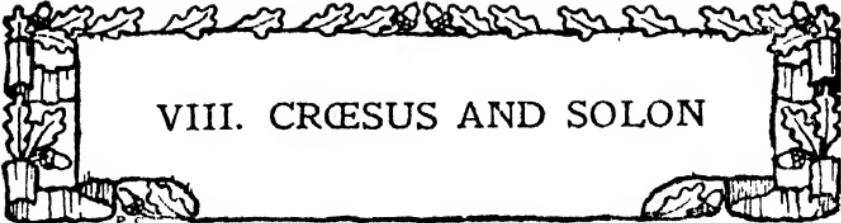
But he only replied again, "That man has

conquered me. I am broken. Go you away while you are yet whole. This matter is beyond your understanding."

So he remained lying there.

But in the morning he rose and went about his affairs as usual. Yet he was not the same Michael Semenovitch as before. It was plain that his heart had received some shock. He began to have fits of melancholy, and to attend to nothing, but sat moodily at home. His reign did not last much longer. When the Feast of St. Peter arrived the owner came to visit his estate. He called on his overseer the first day, but the overseer lay sick. He called on him again the second day, but still the overseer lay sick. Then the owner learnt that Michael had been drinking heavily, and deposed him from his stewardship. The ex-overseer still hung about the homestead, doing no work and growing ever more melancholy. Everything which he possessed he drank away, and descended even to stealing his wife's shawls and taking them to the tavern to exchange for drink. Even the peasants pitied him, and gave him liquor. He survived less than a year, and died at last of *vodka*.





VIII. CRŒSUS AND SOLON

IN olden times there reigned over a certain country a great and wealthy king called Crœsus.

One day there chanced to visit Crœsus a Greek philosopher named Solon, famed as a wise man and a just.

Seated upon his throne, and robed in his most gorgeous apparel, Crœsus asked of Solon: "Have you ever seen aught more splendid than this?"

"Of a surety have I," replied Solon. "Peacocks, cocks, and pheasants glitter with colours so diverse and so brilliant that no art can compare with them."

Then Crœsus exhibited the whole of his riches before Solon's eyes, as well as boasted of the number of foes he had slain, and the number of territories he had conquered. Then he said:

"You have lived long in the world, and have visited many countries. Tell me whom you consider to be the happiest man living?"

"The happiest man living I consider to be a certain poor man who lives in Athens," replied Solon.

"Why do you say that?" asked Crœsus.

"Because," replied Solon, "the man of whom I speak has worked hard all his life, has been content with little, has reared fine children, has served his city honourably, and has achieved a noble reputation."

When Crœsus heard this he exclaimed :

"And do you reckon that I am not fit to be compared with the man of whom you speak?"

To which Solon replied :

"Often it befalls that a poor man is happier than a rich man. Call no man happy until he is dead."

The king dismissed Solon, for he was not pleased at his words.

"A fig for melancholy!" he thought. "While a man lives he should live for pleasure."

So he forgot about Solon entirely.

Not long afterwards the king's son died. Next, it was told to Crœsus that the Emperor Cyrus was coming to make war upon him.

So Crœsus went out against Cyrus with a great army, but the enemy won the battle, shattered Crœsus' forces, and penetrated to the capital.

Then the foreign soldiers began to sack and fire the city. One soldier seized Crœsus himself, and was just about to stab him, when his son darted forward and cried aloud :

"Do not touch him! That is Crœsus, the king!"

So the soldiers carried Crœsus away to the Emperor ; but Cyrus was celebrating his victory at a banquet, and could not speak with the captive, so orders were sent out for Crœsus to be executed.

In the middle of the city square the soldiers built a great burning-pile, and upon the top of it they placed King Crœsus.

Crœsus gazed around him, and remembered the words of the Greek philosopher, and, bursting into tears, could only say : " Ah, Solon, Solon ! "

The soldiers were closing in about the pile when the Emperor Cyrus arrived to view the execution. As he did so he caught these words uttered by Crœsus, but could not understand them. So he commanded Crœsus to be taken from the pile, and inquired of him what he had just said.

Crœsus answered : " I was but naming the name of a wise man—of one who told me a great truth—a truth that is of greater worth than all earthly riches, than all our kingly glory."

And Crœsus related to Cyrus his conversation with Solon. The Emperor bethought him that he too was but a man, that he too knew not what Fate might have in store for him. So in the end he had mercy upon Crœsus, and became his friend.



COUNT LEO TOLSTOY

TOLSTOY is known to the world not only as a great writer of fiction but also as a social reformer so earnest in his convictions that he gave up, at the age of sixty-seven, all his property, money and wordly goods, and lived thereafter the life of a simple peasant. This was the most striking event of his career and it ought to be kept well in the forefront in any attempt to gain a clear idea of his life, character, and influence.

Leo Tolstoy was born on the 9th of September, 1828, in a large, solitary country house near Tula, which lies in the heart of European Russia, about one hundred and twenty miles south of Moscow. His mother was a Russian princess and his father was a count, and he was the youngest but one of a family of five. At the age of three he lost his mother, and about six years later his father died. His childhood was, therefore, somewhat loveless and sad, and he spent many hours in lonely brooding, being filled with the idea that Death was constantly lurking near him, ready to carry him off as it had taken away his mother and father.

But one day he suddenly revolted against this view of things, made up his mind to enjoy the passing moment, flung aside his lesson books, and went to bed with a box of sweetmeats and an armful of story-books, determined to take his fill of pleasure! Fortunately, he found affectionate friends among the simple-minded, loyal servants of the various relatives to whose charge the care of the family was entrusted, and he often said in later life that he had many happy memories of his childhood.

At the age of fifteen Tolstoy entered the University of Kazan, and gave himself up to the gaieties in which the wealthier students indulged, for they spent little time or energy in serious studies. But he soon grew tired of this aimless life and after several attempts to follow a definite course of profitable study he left the university and went back to the life of a country gentleman filled with a sincere desire to improve the conditions of life of the peasantry on his estates and become a model landlord.

He met with little encouragement even from the peasants themselves, and after several unsuccessful attempts at reform he joined the army and took part in some military operations in the Caucasus. Then he began to write, and his first book, *Childhood*, appeared when he was twenty-

four years of age. This was followed by three other books in quick succession. Then the Crimean War broke out and he volunteered for active service. He fought under Prince Gortchakov in Bulgaria, and then asked to be sent to Sebastopol, where his personal courage and endurance were put to the most severe tests, and he spent much of his time in cheering and encouraging his comrades, joking and laughing with them, and telling them stories. He next wrote *Tales from Sebastopol*, which made him famous, while the Tsar Nicholas sent orders to the besieged fortress that such a promising writer was not to be exposed to personal danger. Not long afterwards he was sent to St. Petersburg, where he was received with open arms, and entertained by all the leaders of society and literature. He seems to have enjoyed the gay life of the capital for a time, but his experiences in the war had renewed the desire to improve the lot of the peasants from whose ranks were drawn the common soldiers whose quiet heroism he had admired so much at Sebastopol. He made up his mind to spend his strength and his wealth, and to use his gift of writing, in the service of the labouring classes ; and in order to prepare himself for his future task he set out on tour, visiting Germany, Italy, England, France and Switzerland, and

making arrangements for meeting all the foremost thinkers of the day.

Then he returned to his family estates, on which some time before he had given freedom to the serfs, thus getting ahead of the general Emancipation Act of 1861, which conferred personal liberty upon the serfs throughout Russia. He opened a school to which the children were allowed to come as they pleased, to choose their subjects of study, and to be free from punishment. "Freedom" was the rule of life in this school, and if things did not go well the teacher was responsible. Tolstoy taught Bible history, drawing, and singing, and he encouraged his neighbours to set up schools of a similar kind. But the experiment was not successful, probably because there was too much freedom in the schools. At all events the "free" schools did not please the central authorities at St. Petersburg, and when Tolstoy wished to try again on the same lines he was not allowed to do so.

Meanwhile he had many duties on his estate in connection with disputes among the peasants, and the stories of this book were written after a long experience of arbitrating and advising in village disputes. Much of the advice and counsel given by the older or wiser men in these tales was no doubt given to real peasants by the arbi-

trator Tolstoy. The humour of many of the situations appealed to him, but the work was heavy and its immediate results somewhat disappointing. In 1862 Tolstoy married, and for the next period of his life he gave himself up to the care of his family. He had thirteen children and he was the playmate of them all. Punishment was unknown among them, but an offender was "sent to Coventry," and only allowed to come back when the fault had been acknowledged.

Meanwhile Tolstoy was writing, and his two most famous stories, *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*, were published when he was about forty years of age. After the appearance of these books the author's health broke down, and he went off to live among the Bashkir nomads, whose life and customs he describes in the first story of this volume. Here his health was once more restored, and with renewed vigour his thoughts once again turned to social reform. From about the year 1880 he gave up the life of his own class and became, outwardly at least, a peasant. "He rose early and went to work in the fields, ploughing, cutting the corn, working for the widow and orphan, and helping them to gather in the crops. He also learnt boot-making, and enjoyed being praised for his skill. Thus he laboured late and early, and in these simple physical acts found

the best cure for his attacks of despondency—‘Simplicity! Simplicity! Simplicity!’ His food and drink, his pleasures and personal indulgences, were curtailed. Meat was given up and replaced by a vegetarian diet. Field sports—equivalents for cruelty and lust of blood—were abandoned, and his gun hidden away to rot and rust. Even tobacco was renounced as luxurious and unhealthy.”¹

Of course it was impossible that he should actually become a peasant. He had not the mind, thoughts, or traditions of the class to which he wished to belong. His family duties and affections forced him, in some degree, to live a life which was quite different from that of the tillers of the soil, and without entirely cutting himself off from his well-loved wife and children he could not really share the peasant’s mode of living. So he came to the conclusion that he must give up his possessions completely, and in 1888 he made over his estates to his family, appointing the countess as trustee. But he continued to live with his family in much the same way as before except that he left the duties of a landlord to be performed by others. It was at this time that he began to write the simple short tales some of which are printed in this book.

¹ Dr. C. Hagberg Wright.

Each of these tales is a parable, or "an earthly story with a heavenly meaning," and contains a definite moral or lesson. The stories became very popular and some of them were disapproved of by the government because it was thought that their teaching was unsettling for the peasants.

During 1891-92 there was a terrible famine in Russia, and Tolstoy and his family spent their wealth and their strength in doing all that could possibly be done to help the starving peasantry. Some of the scenes of destitution in the stories of this book are records of real life, and the ministrations of old Elijah were very similar to those of Tolstoy himself.

Then came the author's great book *Resurrection*, which was written to help the sect known as the Doukhobors who lived in the Caucasus region according to simple laws framed by themselves, and who refused to perform military service. These people were severely treated by the government, but when Tolstoy became their champion they were left in peace, and finally allowed to emigrate to America.

The great Russian author, teacher, philosopher, and reformer died on the 20th of November, 1910. He may be considered as one of the makers of modern Russia, and though there are many varied opinions on his ideas and teaching all are agreed

that he was one of the leading thinkers of the age in which he lived, and that he was at least "on the side of the angels." The reader must form his own personal opinion on his works and thoughts by reading his books, most of which have been translated into English and can be obtained in cheap editions or from the public library.



THOUGHTS AND QUESTIONS AFTER READING THE STORIES

I. HOW MUCH LAND DOES A MAN REQUIRE?

1. What old fable does the first part of this story recall?
2. Collect from this story hints about the daily life and customs of the peasants, *e.g.*: the stove; the "straw-yard"; "we live round about it in a circle"; the Mir; a travelling peasant, etc.
3. Inquire into the meaning of the sentences: "The poorer (peasants) had to mortgage their land to the merchants"; "He took a year's lease of some wheat-land."
4. Try to make a rough pencil sketch of the camp of the Bashkirs as described in Section V.
5. What do you think about the starshina's offer?
6. What quality was lacking in Pakhom's character?
7. Consider the fitness of the simile: "black as a poppy-head."
8. If you had been in Pakhom's place what would you have done?
9. What have you learnt from this tale about the physical character of the Russian country?
10. A critic says: "This story would be finer without the Devil." What do you think about this?

II. THAT WHEREBY MEN LIVE

1. Try to make a pencil sketch of the cobbler from the particulars given in the second paragraph.
2. What do the muzhiks drink? (Look up the name in the dictionary where you may find it spelt *Moujiks*.) What was its effect upon Simon?
3. Write a short estimate of Simon's character from Sections I. and II. of this story. What is the significance of each of the sentences: "Things like this cannot be helped"; "All things come from God"; "Such things do not happen for nothing."
4. Make an estimate of Matrena's character from Section III. and onwards. Consider the justice of her opinion: "He can't possibly be honest, for he seems so nervous."
5. What do you think of the relation between Simon and Michael as master and man?
6. What did Simon mean by saying that Michael was "more than simple man"?
7. Write a paragraph on the sentence: "In his face, before, there had been death, but now the face had come suddenly to life; and in that face I saw God."
8. The three "words" learnt by Michael are arranged to work up to a "climax." Investigate the meaning of the word in this connection.
9. Write an explanatory passage on paragraph 6 of Section XII.

III. CHILDREN MAY BE WISER THAN THEIR ELDERS

1. Study carefully the pen picture at the beginning of this story. It suggests a typical Russian village scene when the snows are beginning to melt.
2. What is the moral of this story?

3. Can you think of a text or motto which might have been placed at the head of the tale ?

IV. THE GRAIN THAT WAS LIKE AN EGG

1. Note the familiarity of the Tsar with his people, who spoke of him as the " Little Father."
2. About how many years back does the story go ?
3. Try to express in your own words what Tolstoy wishes to teach by this story. What does he seem to suggest about the connection between physical decay and goodness of life ?

V. THE TWO OLD MEN

1. What do you think a starosta is ?
2. Write in your own words your estimate of the character of each of the old men. Write them down in double column form so as to show the contrast clearly. Do not take the part of one or the other for the moment. Reserve your judgment until you have read to the end of the tale.
3. All the details of this journey are worthy of careful study as they afford such an excellent picture of Russian rural life, in which the travelling pilgrim played a prominent part, as well as periodical poverty of the most awful description.
4. What is it which, at last, causes the cheery Elijah to be distressed ?
5. What is the central sentence of Section VI. ?
6. Note, in Section VI., Elijah's dealings with his neighbour in the matter of the bees. Investigate " bees " and " swarming " in the encyclopædia.
7. Trace the journey of the pilgrims on a map of the Eastern Mediterranean.
8. What is the central sentence or core of Section XI. ?

VI. NEGLECT A FIRE, AND 'TWILL NOT BE QUENCHED

1. As a description of a wrangle the paragraph beginning: "The young woman was greatly offended" would be difficult to beat. Tolstoy knew only too well that such disputes leading to continued feuds were all too common in Russian villages.

2. Discuss the passage: "That cannot be done . . . the one with the other." When can the law be set aside?

3. Study carefully the pictorial character of the paragraph on page 168 which begins: "Suppose I make . . ."

4. Give your candid opinion on the conclusion of this story. Suggest a different ending.

VII. THE CANDLE

1. This story gives a good glimpse of the state of Russia before the emancipation of the serfs, and is worth studying from that point of view.

2. Consider the sentence: "The overseer raged all the more because they feared him so."

3. What was it which finally overcame the overseer?

4. Note that this story embodies one of Tolstoy's precepts taken literally from Scripture: "Resist not evil." What is your own feeling on the whole matter?

VIII. CRÆSUS AND SOLON

1. Ponder and discuss the philosopher's opinion "Call no man happy, etc."

2. Look up Cyrus in the encyclopædia and note what eventually happened to him.

3. Write a short essay on Solon's "happiest man."

